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Number 76

November 1990

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The Definitive Computer Game Magazine



1990 Christmas Buying Guide

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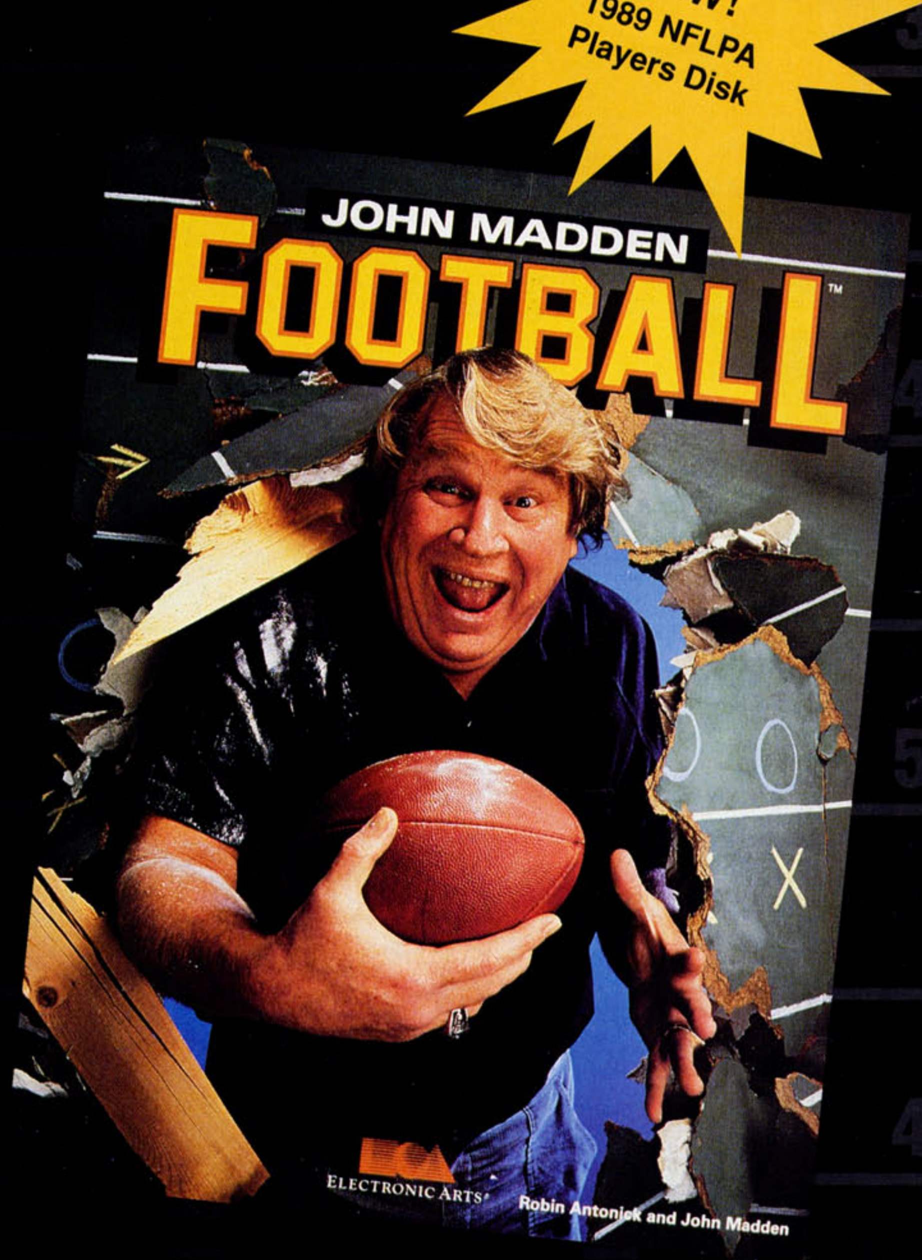
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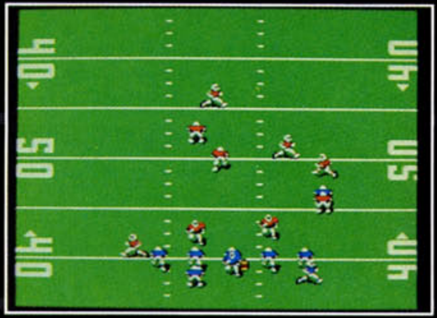
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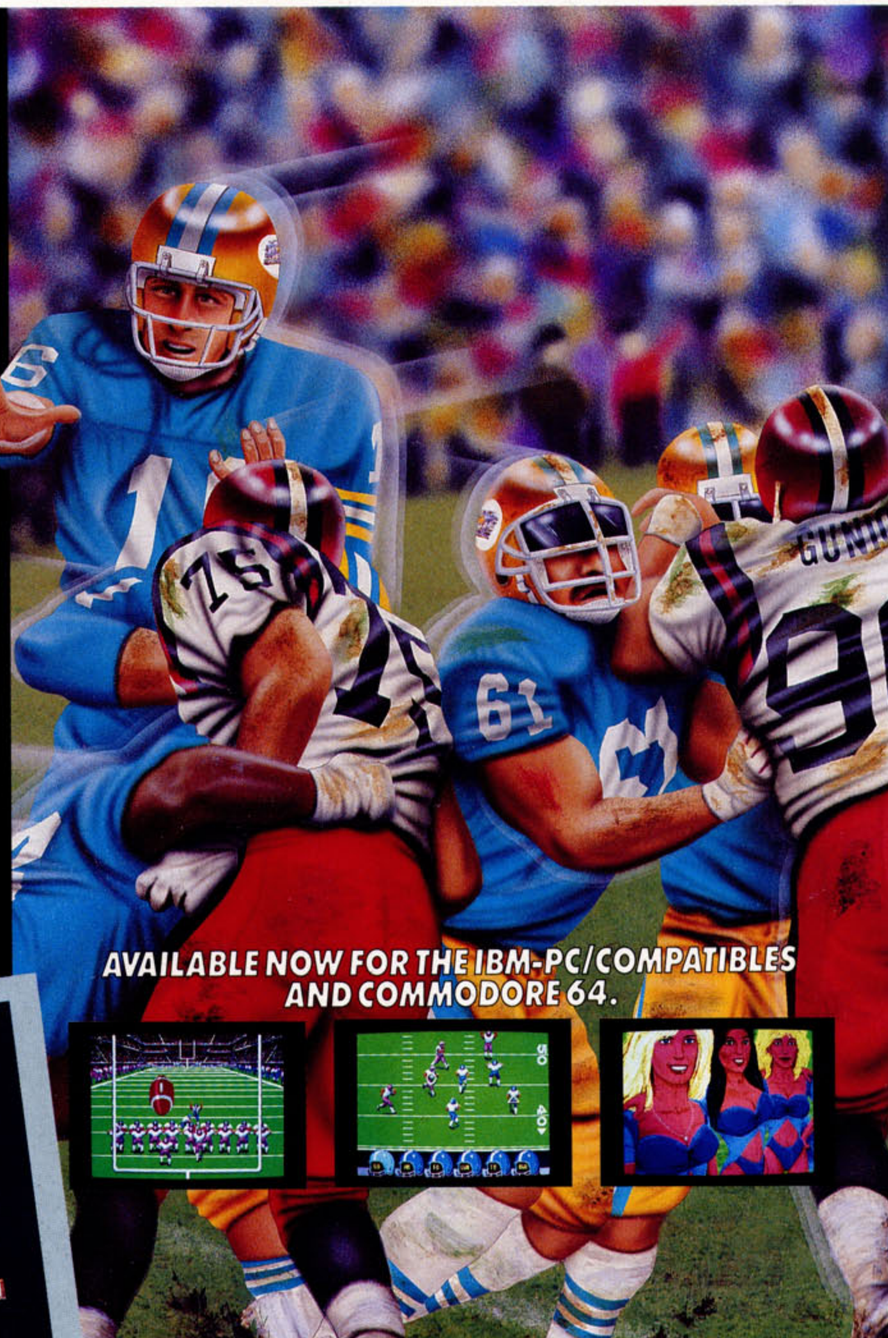
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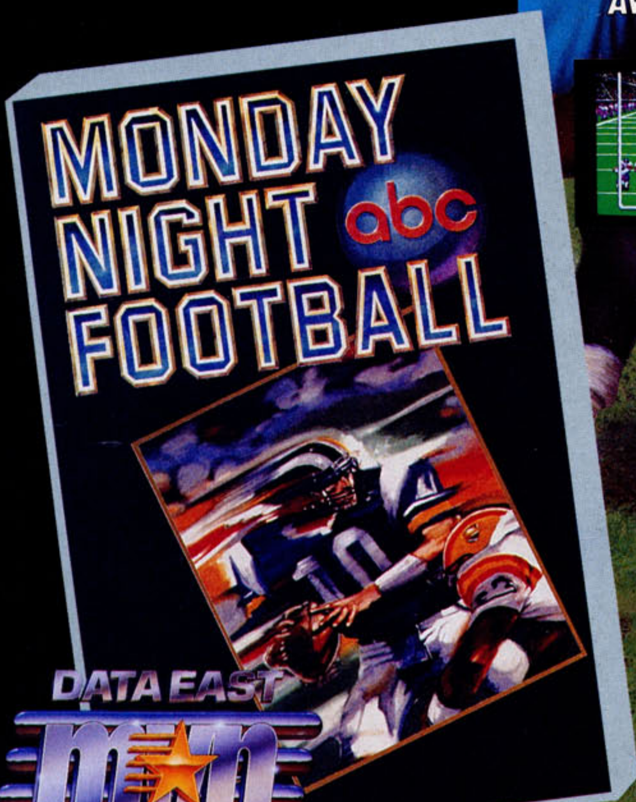
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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Covering the World of Computer Games for Ten Years

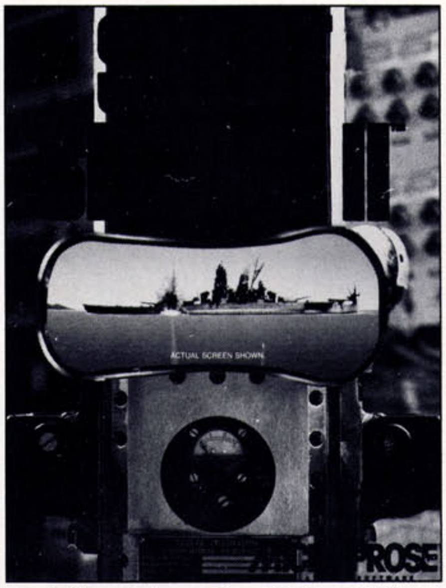
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Vol. I

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IBM screens pictured.

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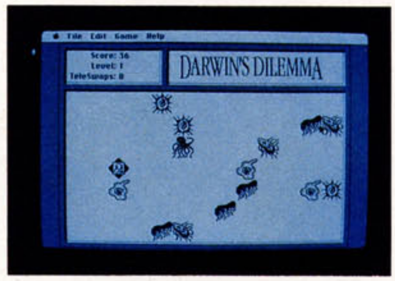
To order The Lord Of the Rings, Vol. I, call 1-800-969-GAME. Available on MS-DOS for $54.95. Amiga coming soon.



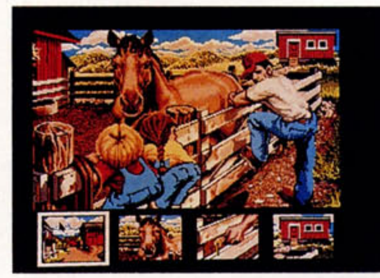
Ishido: The Way of Stones



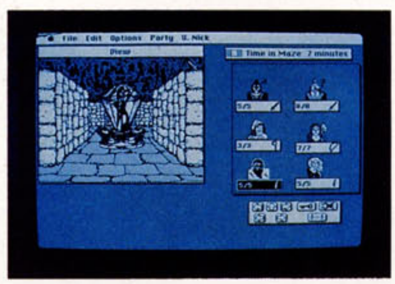
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ACTION PACK BRAIN BLASTER: If there was ever a shining example of truth in advertising, it would be the ad copy on the back of this game box that challenges players to scramble their brains and challenge their reflexes. The two games in this package, "Xenon 2" and "Bombuzal," are both a couple of joystick-breaking arcade games. In "Xenon 2," the player must scramble through time to find five hidden time bombs which threaten to destroy history. In "Bombuzal," an assortment of bombs must be detonated without the player getting blown away, while the player maneuvers around an ever-changing board. IBM, Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

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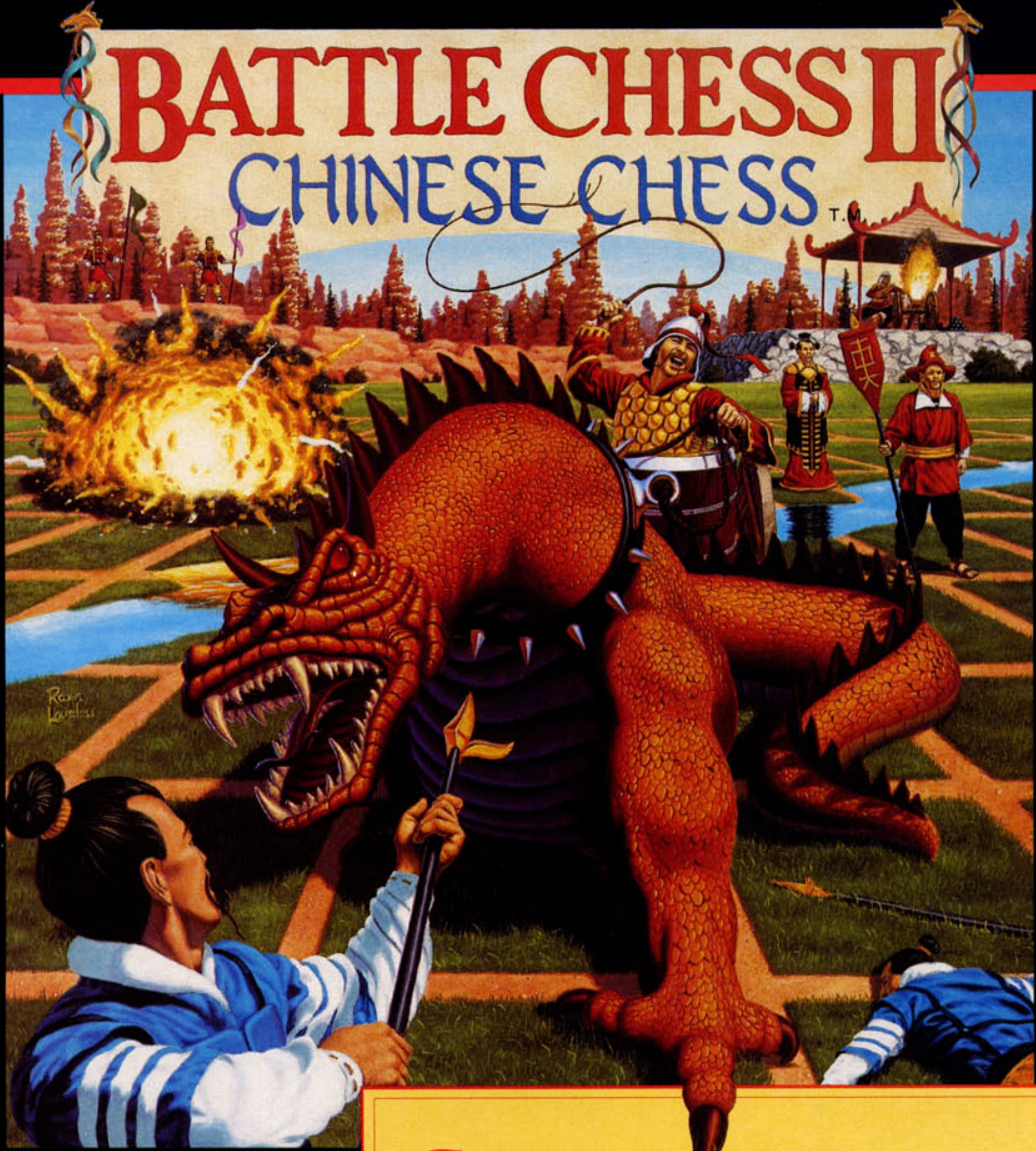
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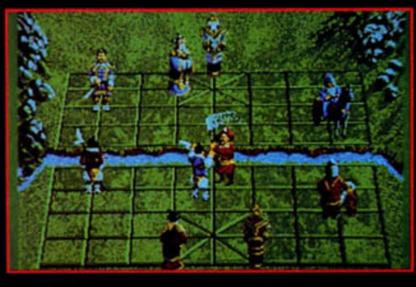
DARWIN'S DILEMMA: This cute spa-

(Continued on page 60)

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Actual IBM Screens Pictured

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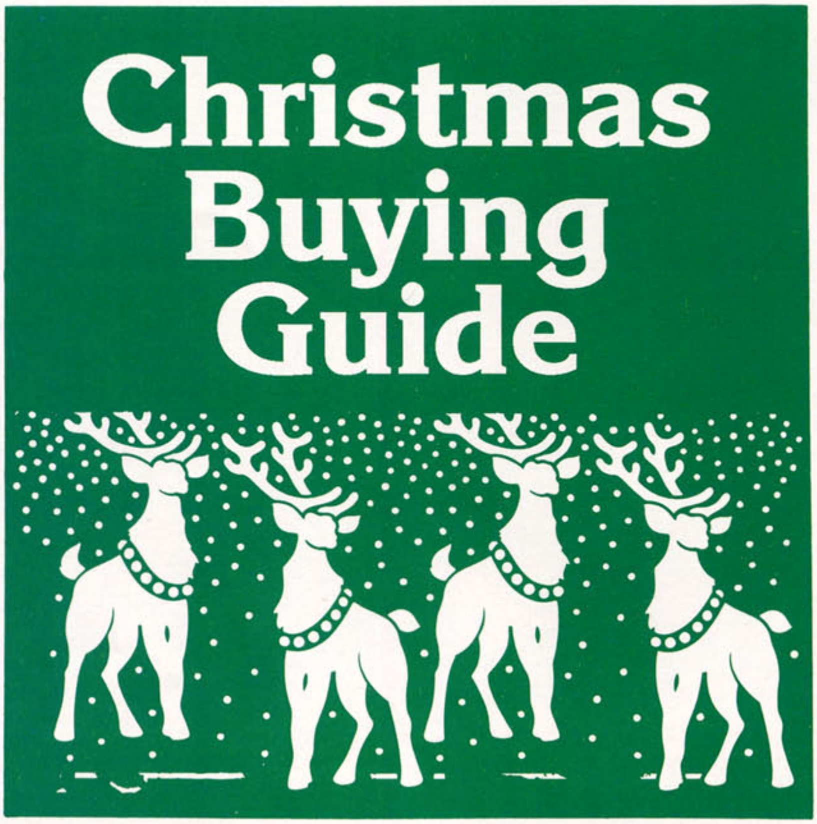
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Computer Gaming World's Fourth Annual



CGW's editorial department had to climb into those abysmally hot and ridiculous-looking elf suits even earlier this year in order to publish this "Fourth Annual Christmas Buying Guide" in the November issue. The earlier schedule means that some products which could already be on store shelves by the time this issue arrives may have not yet been received in the *CGW* offices. However, even some games we haven't seen will be *mentioned* in each category so that you can circle the titles and hand the list to your personal Santa, Father Christmas, sugar daddy, parents, spouse or executive in charge of the office Christmas party. Since, as of press time, many of these games have only been handled in stages of partial completion, note that this guide is intended to be a list of games which could potentially be major hits this Christmas and not *CGW*'s final critical word on any of the games.

Action for Andy

Covert Action from **MicroProse** ($59.95) offers a hybrid style similar to their award-winning *Pirates!* and the critically respected *Sword of the Samurai*. This time, the subject is espionage and the game combines action sequences such as chase scenes with mental puzzles such as cryptography and wiretapping a phone. First looks at this game indicate that it may be more challenging for the "strategist and role-player" than either of its predecessors in style.

Star Control from **Accolade** (Amiga, IBM, $49.95) is a different kind of hybrid action game. It offers strategic value as players plan for the colonization of planets, exploitation of resources and construction of fortifications, and arcade action as differing vessels with distinctive specialties try to zap the other player's spacecraft into the void. See the strategy article on page 27.

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2 from **Bethesda Softworks** (Amiga, IBM, $54.95) is a new version (contact Bethesda for the upgrade policy) of the best-selling hockey game. Now, the game will constantly display a text line indicating which player is handling the puck at a particular moment and the model has become even richer and more detailed than that in the previous product.

Cinemaware has just released *Wings* (Amiga, IBM, $49.95), the long-awaited action game which follows the diary of an actual World War I pilot. The visual perspective is different than the WWI aviation simulations being released this fall. It features a camera angle behind the pilot, no gauges (in fact, no console) and plenty of cinematic effect in the **Cinemaware** tradition. Even non-action gamers may want to consider this product, because it is a slower-paced set action game in which, even when the pilot dies, the player is able to continue forward with the story. Time marches inexorably on in this action-based story product.

Adventure for Annie

One of Michael Berlyn's novels, *The Integrated Man*, was exploring the dark psyche that became the cyberpunk genre before there was a cyberpunk genre. Now, the game designer who brought *Infidel*, *Suspended* and others to adventure gamers has teamed up with **Accolade** to produce *Altered Destiny* (IBM, $59.95). In *Altered Destiny*, the graphics engine and parser introduced in *Search for the King* have matured. The introductory sequence seems like a parody of *Leisure Suit Larry* being summoned *Worlds of Ultima* style through the cathode-ray tube of his television set and into a universe of the psyche where he meets a powerful character that looks vaguely like a past villain from *Star Trek* gone awry. Fortunately, that's about the last element in the plot that bears any similarity to anything familiar. This looks like a challenging game with considerable variety.

From France, *BAT* (the acronym stands for "Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters" in the U.S. version) is **UbiSoft**'s entry in the "point and click" adventure sweepstakes (Amiga, Atari ST, IBM, $49.95, C-64, $39.95). The artwork for the game provides a menacing, futuristic feel that is only slightly lighter

(Continued on page 24)



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The Rumor Bag

by Felix Ian Bond



In Milwaukee there is an industrial area not far from the river which flows at a near-glacial pace through the center of downtown. About a block from the river's bank, I located the object of my quest. I noticed the parking lot, the searchlight playing against the side of a decaying warehouse wall, pockmarked with powdery mortar which looked like an irregular checkerboard of bat guano. The sign on the door read, "International Imports and Exports, Ltd." With visions of James Bond's "Universal Export" dancing in my head, I entered the delivery door and was immediately confronted by a tall, blond male with that "special services" look. "May I help you, sir?"

I gave him the password and he immediately pressed a button which caused the traditional bookcase to slide open and allow access to a concrete passageway. A graffiti artist had painted *Suez '73* in large red letters along one wall. I realized that the word must be getting out on **Command Simulations**' next computer wargame. It will be similar to *White Death*, but the artificial opponent is supposed to be much better.

I reached the end of the tunnel and the apparent dead end quietly slid to one side, depositing me at a secret bar. I was debating the propriety of ordering a martini with a twist of lemon, shaken not stirred, when I was the one who ended up being shaken. "Felix, old boy," came a voice behind me, "you're going to have to get rid of that paper bag if you expect to travel incognito." I turned to face my informant in time to hear him ask, "Still driving the old Aston-Martin? Jumped over any open drawbridges lately?"

I assured him that I was, indeed, driving the Aston and the only stunt driving that I was willing to do, of late, is going to take place in **Spectrum HoloByte**'s just-released *Stunt Driver* and **Broderbund**'s just-announced *Stunts* (anticipated first-quarter release). Both products allow players to design their own stunt tracks and race against opponents head-to-head.

Speaking of motor sports, he told me he'd just gotten a peek at **Accolade**'s *Test Drive III: The Passion* (anticipated October release) and found out that there are three prototype automobiles to be driven in the game: the Chevrolet CERV III, Ferrari-based Pininfarina Mythos, and Lamborghini Diablo. He said players can back up on the road, go cross-country and even "hide" in structures.

In return, I told him I'd heard from three sources that Allen Varney, designer of the *Globbo* pen and paper role-playing games was forming his own company, **Allen Varney Games**. Of course, Allen is *often* the butt of practical jokes, so I was pretty skeptical. My source was, too, but he gave me a number to call. I entered a nearby phone booth and inserted a quarter in the nearest coin slot. Unfortunately, it was one of those phone booths with a sound effects generator, so the party on the other end of the phone heard a machine gun in the background as I asked if he had anything going with Allen's alleged company. "No," said my source, "but I heard that **GEnie** has been negotiating agreements with **Andon Games**, **Reality Simulations** and **Flying Buffalo, Inc.** (all play-by-mail companies) to do 100% computer-moderated versions of *Kings & Things*, *DuelMasters*, *Hyborean War*, and *Starweb*." He said there was even a rumor that the first *Starweb* game might be a no-turn-fee game. He hadn't heard of **Allen Varney Games** and he never intended to play *Globbo*. "Maybe you should check with Lord British," he said.

Feeling a call of nature, I decided to find a rest room before attempting to find Lord British. I opened the nearest men's room door, only to discover that the doorway was completely bricked up and had "Out of Order" painted across the bricks. Carved into the bricks was another, pardon the expression, cryptic note. It simply said, "The Black Crypt." At the time, I figured it meant that either a spy or another rumor bag guy was buried alive in there. Later, I discovered that *The Black Crypt* is an Amiga game with graphics that rival *Dungeon Master*. It was designed by some college students in northern Wisconsin who haven't found a publisher. However, it was *very* well received by gamers in the computer room at **GenCon**.

I found another men's room to take care of my vital "mission" and practically stepped on Lord British's boots as I exited. "M'lord," I stuttered (Mr. Sipe and Mr. Wilson have drummed this nobility thing into my head, in spite of the thick bag), "dost thou know anything of this **Allen Varney Games**?"

Conqueror of the marketplace and veteran of hundreds of interviews, my editors' liege lord confidently stated, "I can neither confirm nor deny any such rumors. In fact, even if my kingdom should have mercantile dealings with such an alleged company, I couldst neither confirm nor deny. However, since thou art such a loyal subject, I can tell thee that the second product in the *Worlds of Ultima* series should be a Victorian-era Martian adventure with cameos by historical figures."

I tried to confirm whether H. G. Wells, Alistair Crowley, Arthur Conan Doyle and the like would be in the game, but his lordship retreated to that stance of neither confirming nor denying. I bid a "Fare thee well!" to Lord British and quickly entered another phone booth. I quickly dropped a coin in the slot and started to call another source. Before I could dial, a voice on the other end of the line commanded me to dial three numbers. I did so and another wall slid to the side revealing a down staircase.

I followed the staircase down past an interrogation room where I overheard a familiar name. The victim was apparently undergoing a rigorous interrogation, but I stopped dead when I recognized his voice through the screams. It was Allen Varney, vehemently denying that he was starting his own game company. I had to save him. I entered the room and shouted for the torturers . . . er . . . investigators to stop. They quickly bound me and placed *me* on the "hot seat" next to Allen.

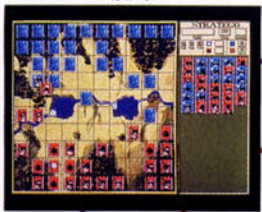
"What do you know about *Sphere of Influence*?" they demanded.

"I don't have any," I flippantly responded. They brought in three of my favorite public relations ladies and told me the gorgeous women would *never* speak to me again if I didn't tell the truth. I cracked. "It's a geopolitical game of economics, politics and military decision-making that's due out from **Spectrum HoloByte** in the first quarter of '91." The master interrogator's face wrinkled obscenely into a cruel smile.

"That's not all we've been meaning to ask you . . ."

(To be continued)

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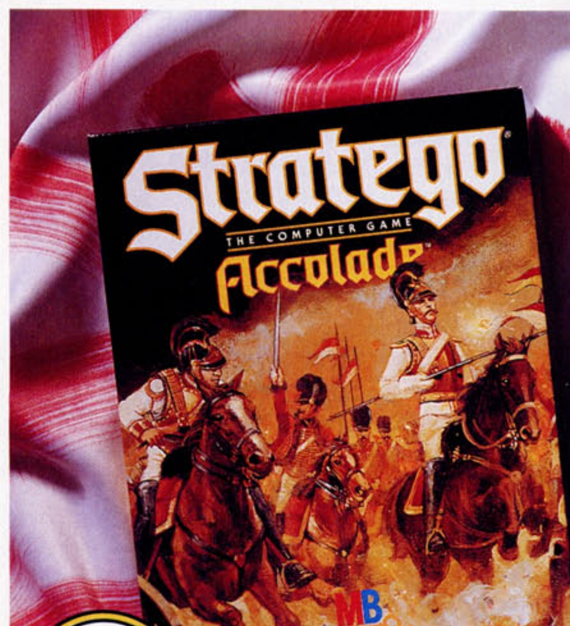
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MAC II

Actual game screens from IBM PC and Mac II

IBM PC



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MAC II



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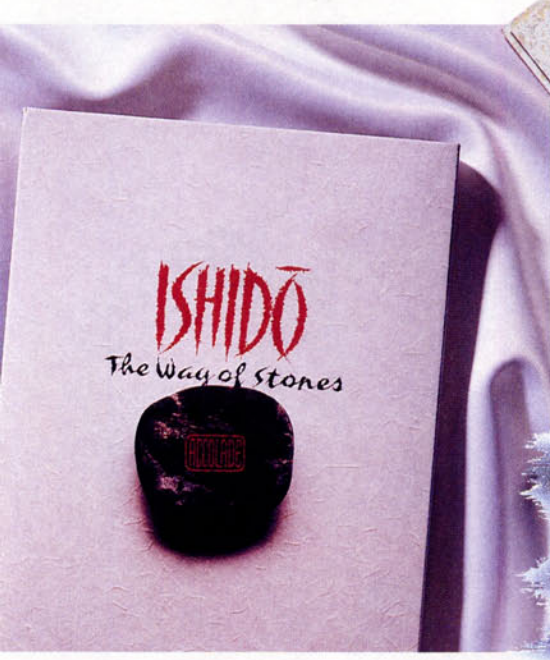






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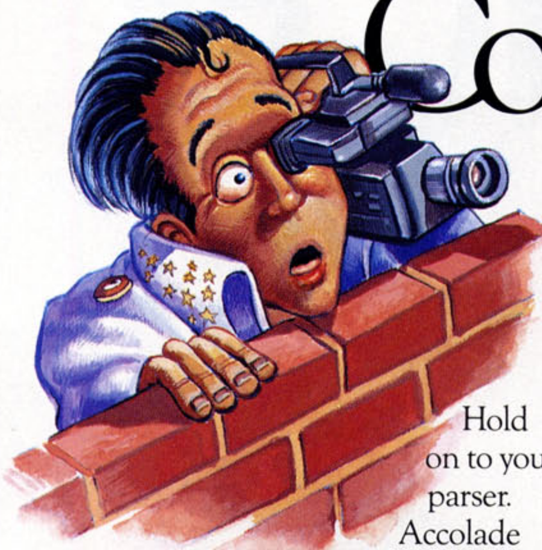




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Actual game screens from IBM PC/MCGA



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MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy

Paragon Software's Computer Version of Game Designers' Workshop's Renowned Traveller RPG

by L. S. Lichtmann

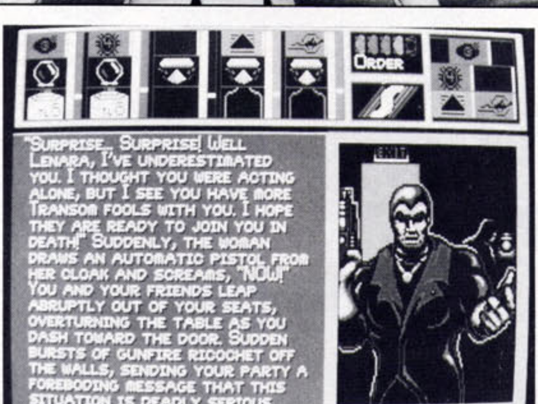
TITLE:	MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
PUBLISHER:	Paragon Software
DISTRIBUTOR:	Medalist International Hunt Valley, MD

Game Designers' Workshop's *Traveller* pen-and-paper role-playing game (RPG) has been *the* preeminent science-fiction RPG since 1977, thanks to its background universe, its wealth of excellent support materials, and the cutting-edge rules revision (*MegaTraveller*) done about three years back. For those not familiar with the Traveller universe, it postulates a time about 3500 years from now, when a method of faster-than-light travel, the Jump, has allowed humanity to spread throughout the nearby stars.

The greatest power in known space is the Imperium, a human-dominated empire owed allegiance by thousands of worlds. Across its frontier, in a region known as the Spinward Marches, the Imperium confronts another human power, the Zhodani Consulate. Relations with the Zhodani have been bad for the better part of a millennium. The last war between the powers was less than 30 years ago, and there are rumblings that a Fifth Frontier War may be imminent. . .

The title is misleading. *MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy* (*MT1*) is actually set in the days just before the Fifth Frontier War, some years before the wrenching changes in the Imperium which transform the background of *Traveller* into that of *MegaTraveller*.



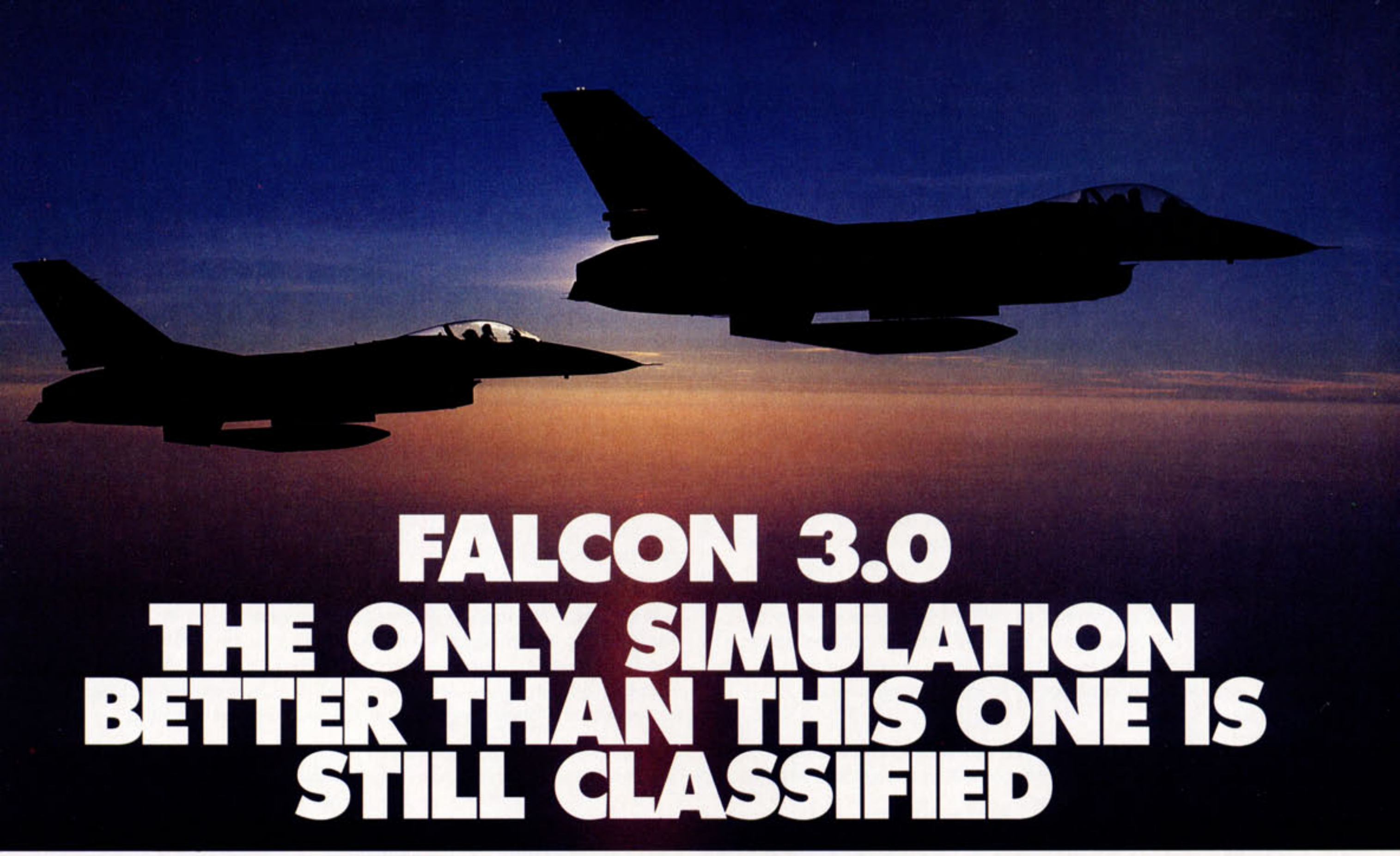


An internal security agent of Sharurshid, an Imperium-wide transportation/service corporation, has found that Sharurshid's local director, Konrad Kiefer, is helping the Zhodani smuggle arms into the Imperium, in support of local rebellions to be coordinated with a Zhodani invasion. The agent has recruited the player's party of ex-Imperial military, Scout, and Merchant service veterans to defeat Kiefer.

Gameplay

Frankly, *MegaTraveller 1* has generated quite a division of opinion. The vast majority of gamers hate the combat system, to put it mildly (enough so that an update with a completely different combat system should be available from **Paragon** by the time this appears in print). On the other hand, this reviewer actually likes it very much.

Since *Traveller* is an extraordinarily complex and activity-rich environment, even for a pen-and-paper RPG, it is surprising how many of the features of the pen-and-paper game show up in *MT1* in one fashion or another. Whatever else it may be, this is not a routine RPG with the *Traveller* label stuck on it as an afterthought! In part, the result is a computer RPG with a remarkably broad spectrum of activities for the player, including character design, personal combat, exploration, ship-to-ship combat and trade. Experienced *Traveller* players, however, should be aware that some of the features they may have been hoping to



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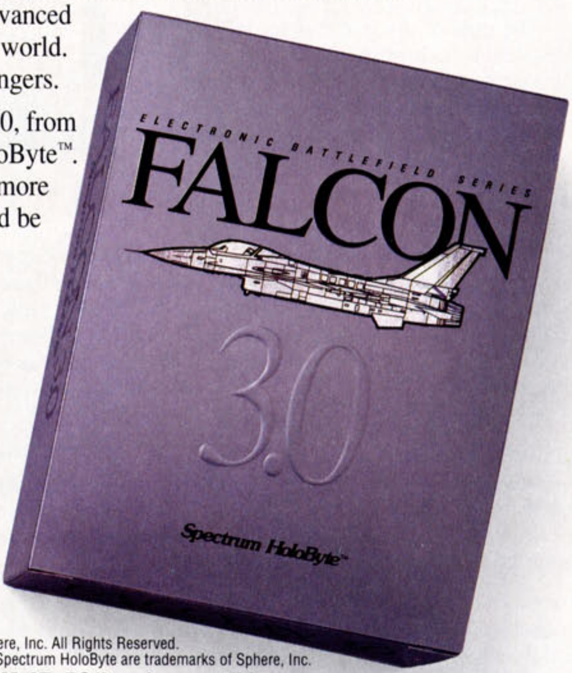
... Nearly blacked out, you ease forward on the stick. The g's drop, and you can see again. There he is! You're on HIS six now. This is going to be sweet. As you get tone you know he's yours.

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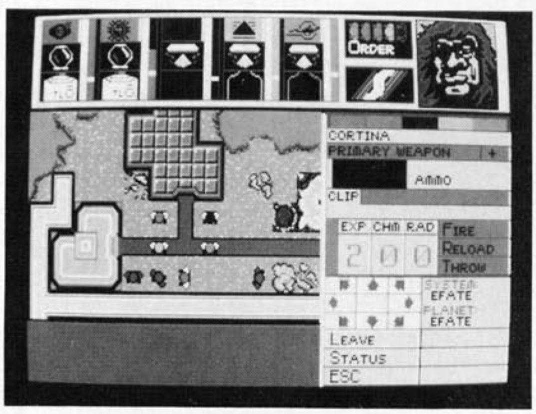
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find, such as alien characters and starship design, have not been included in *MT1* because of space limitations. Such features may be included in future products.

Traveller's philosophy of character generation calls for a lengthy, somewhat tedious character generation process. Fortunately, *MT1* has implemented a complete Traveller character system and automated the procedure, transforming it from a chore to a delight. Any character generated in *MT1* could serve credibly in a standard *Traveller* campaign. The original release did not include a "Print Character" option, but this has been remedied in the recent update.Therefore, assembling a strong party for *MegaTraveller 1* becomes an enjoyable game in itself. Thus, the player is allowed to create a pool of up to 15 characters from which to form a five-character party. As characters are killed in action, replacements may be drawn from the pool, *but* the original population of the pool is all that you have to complete the adventure. Furthermore, to *win*, at least one of your original five characters must have survived throughout the game. This encourages the player to treat characters as assets rather than cannon fodder, and enhances the role-playing aspects of *MT1*.

Those who find the tightly-structured storylines of adventure games to be their least interesting facet will probably find *MT1* to be one of the most successfully free-form computer RPGs this reviewer has ever seen. The world of *MT1* consists of eight stellar systems, each with several destination worlds (complete with their own distinctive character). There are "Non-Player Characters" (NPCs) to interact with in order to glean information and rumors. The player determines the order in which the party visits locations and when.



The goal of the game is to defeat Kiefer. To accomplish this, the party must earn enough Credits to buy an improved space drive, one capable of carrying the ship to the system where a second Sharurshid security agent anxiously awaits delivery of three items vital to derailing Kiefer's plot.

A commendable effort has been made to reproduce in *MT1* the variety of planetary environments possible in the *Traveller* system (another of *Traveller*'s many strong points). Unfortunately, this is somewhat diluted by the small size of the planetary exploration areas. From comments in the manual, this seems to have been at least in part a design choice, to minimize the amount of aimless wandering.

There are many ways of making money in *MT1*. There is the usual RPG routine of stripping the corpses of one's slain foes and selling the items found. In *MT1*, this is augmented by the circumstance that certain NPCs will pay inflated sums for specific items.

A related source of funds is bounty hunting. While adventuring, one encounters certain notorious and unpleasantly skillful gunfighters. Turning their IDs over to the appropriate officer at Imperial Security Headquarters (which you must locate) will net highly useful sums of money.

Successful completion of the various sub-missions offered, such as locating and recovering a religious icon from the nomads who have stolen it, for instance, is the third way to acquire funds. It is probably the most dangerous, as it is here you will encounter not just the lone gunslinger, but groups of alert and deadly enemies.

MT1 implements a speculative trade system similar to, though considerably simplified from, that of *Traveller*. Carrying the *right* goods from world to world can improve one's financial status significantly. It takes some work, however. Experimentation and record keeping are essential.

On top of personal combat, exploration, and trade, interplanetary and interstellar travel represent important activities in *MT1*. In order to get to another world, one boards a ship and maneuvers it to its destination. This means learning to use the shipboard navigation system, at the very least, and using the communications system to get vital information on the worlds one travels to and the ships one encounters.

Beyond simple travel, *MT1* has an extensive ship-to-ship combat system, with looting of cargo as the analog of corpse robbing for greasing the mission's wheels. There is a set of shipboard armaments and equipment supporting the shipboard travel and combat system in the same way that personal equipment and arms support planetary exploration and personal combat.

A unique aspect of the system is the ship's computer. In order to perform certain vital ship's functions, such as making an interstellar Jump, the appropriate software must be loaded and running in the ship's computer when such a function is attempted. This would be a triviality, except that the Universal Law that software expands to exceed available memory operates in *MegaTraveller 1* as in real life. The ship's computer does not have enough space to store (or the ability to run) all vital programs at once, hence, software selection is as important in *MT1* as play selection is in football.

Evaluation

Although CGA and VGA graphics are supported, *MT1*'s graphics are essentially EGA-quality. They are adequate to the task, but only impressive in the variety of screens available and the quantity of information packed into them.

For surface exploration and combat *MT1* relies on an overhead view of the surroundings rather than a party's-eye view. The party appears either as a single figure for travel or broken down into five individual figures for combat. NPC figures wander over the screen under computer control, available for interaction with the party.

Although *MT1* supports a full set of keystrokes to control actions, the entire game can be played with the mouse, except for a few activities concerning purchase and sale of equipment and cargo. The mouse is somewhat poorly implemented, however, in that one must run an obstacle course around the edges of the combat screen in order to move from the menu portion of the screen to the actual combat figures. Players possessing a mouse will want to rely on it, except for combat, where the quick sequencing possible with keystrokes becomes important.

No aspect of *MT1* has generated more complaints than the personal combat system. Many are disappointed because the phased, tactical system of *Traveller* has been modified to have arcade-game characteristics. How can a single player, controlling

(Continued on page 105)

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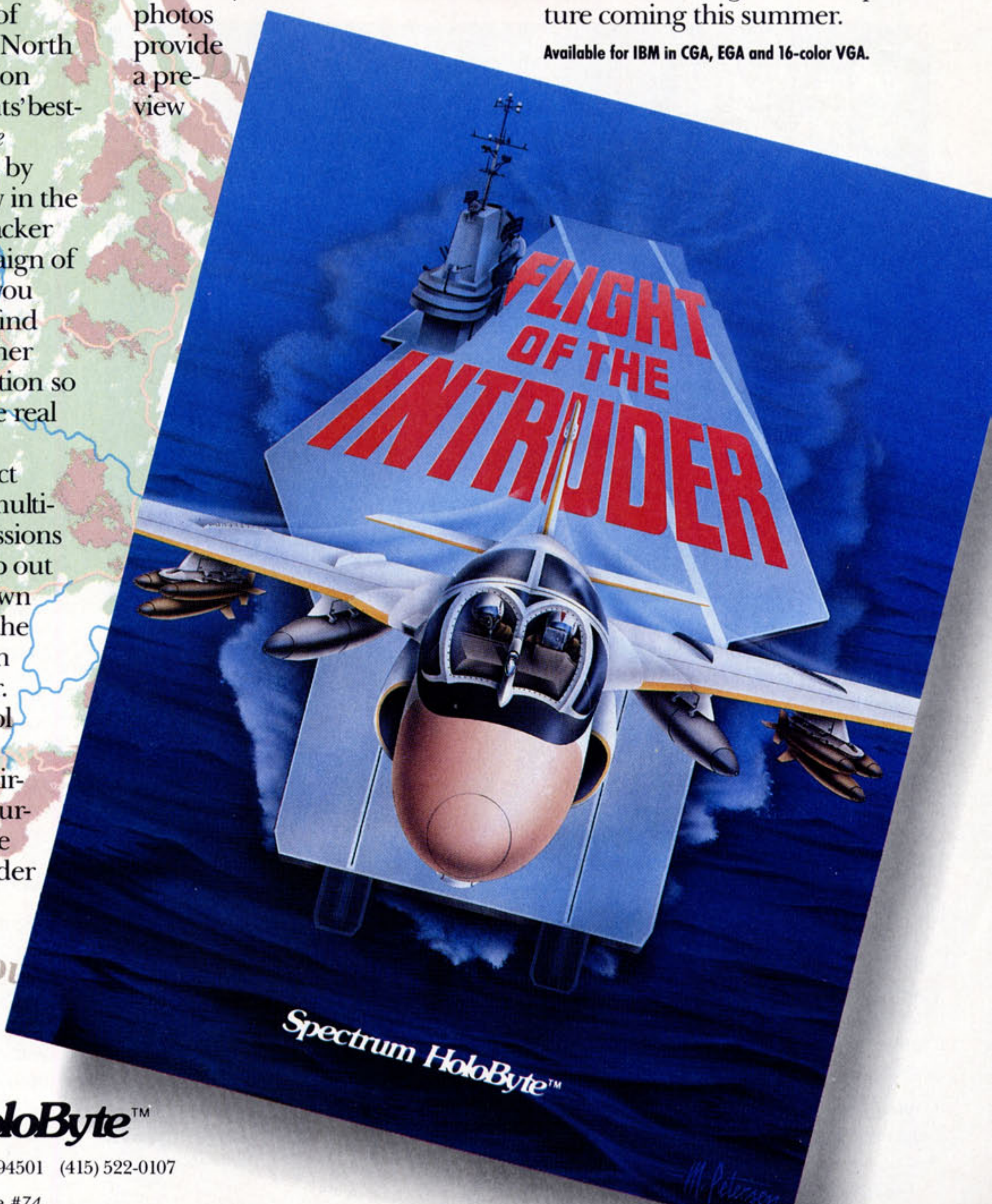
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Continuing Education for the Adventure Gamer

Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All The Girls

by Chris A. Lombardi



TITLE:	Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All The Girls
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Steve Meretzky
PRODUCERS:	Bob Bates & Mike Verdu
PUBLISHER:	Legend Entertainment Group Chantilly, VA 22021

Spellcasting 101 is another dangerous foray into the murky waters of "adult" software.

Being an adventure game aficionado has been rough going these last few years. Since the demise of the text adventure, and thus the passing of the Golden Age of Adventure Gaming, people have tried, with limited success, to find new and different ways of telling a good story. We've seen several attempts at mixed text/graphic adventures and a rash of the now-in-vogue Sierra-style games, but nothing has yet approached the charm and storytelling ability of the classic **Infocom** games. There was something about those classic adventures that could entertain the adventurer more successfully than anything since.

Well, the time for bemoaning a lost era may be over with the release of a new line of products from **Legend Entertainment Group**. From the looks of *Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All The Girls*, the first release on Legend's slate, adventure gaming in the classic mode may get a much needed kick in the pants.

Taken in parts, *Spellcasting 101* does not do anything that hasn't been tried before. The game offers partial-screen graphics, a keyword menu selection system with mouse interface, and niceties like compass-rose movement selection and mouse-responsive graphics. Taken as a whole, one sees that Legend has taken all the good ideas poorly implemented in past efforts and has, finally, done the adventure game interface right. Add to this the very important fact that *Spellcasting 101* is authored by Steve Meretzky, whose game credits (*Planetfall*, *Sorcerer*, *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, and more) read like a "Best Of" adventure gaming list and you'll see why this "Raised-On-Grue-Meat" adventurer/reviewer is excited.

>REVIEWER, TELL ME ABOUT THE STORY

Spellcasting 101 is a racy tale of adventure which some have called *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* meets *Enchanter*. The player assumes the role of Ernie Eaglebeak, a dorky young man who aspires to a life of magic. Ernie's motives are honest and clearly stated—he has always been interested in magic and, besides, sor-


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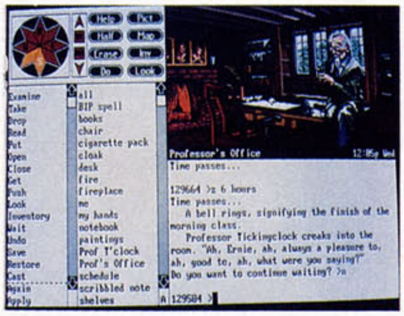
cerers get all the girls. The player leads Ernie on a bawdy romp from his near escape of a life scooping dragon dung through his days as a freshman at Sorcerer U. to the eventual fulfillment of his birth prophesy, while through it all "catering to the special needs of women across the land." The universe is Zorkesque in flavor, the silly magic element is straight out of the *Enchanter* series, and the clever puzzles remind one of *Zork Zero* and *Nord and Bert*. It's a wild ride scattered with sophomoric humor, adolescent sexual fantasy and sarcastic wit in true Meretzkian form.

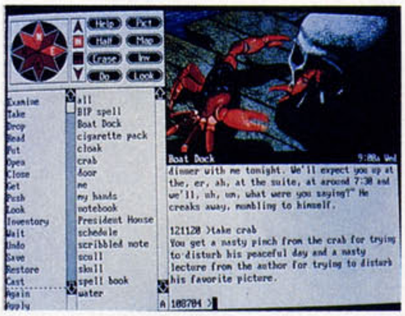
>HIDE SOFTWARE FROM JESSE HELMS

Spellcasting 101 is another dangerous foray into the murky waters of "adult" software. The game contains adult situations, language and graphics of scantily clad nymphs (reads like a MPAA rating [gag]!). Those who have seen an R-rated movie recently will find nothing to shock them. However, like *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, *Spellcasting 101* has both "Naughty" and "Nice" modes of play. The Nice mode of play eliminates all of the situations, graphics, and language that some might find offensive (and that others might find fun) and plays a very tame game. It's a shame that so much work went into an option that will rarely be used, but one must assume that this enables the game to meet *some* community standards, *somewhere*. Unfortunately, unlike *Leather Goddesses of Phobos*, *Spellcasting 101* only offers a game from the male perspective. The energy used in programming the "Nice" mode would more than likely have been better spent in creating a female version of the game. T'will be interesting to see how Scorpia responds to the female exclusion.

>LOOK

Spellcasting 101 provides the player several different ways to see and interact with the world. Although most players will not want to miss the gorgeous EGA one-third screen graphics, the game *can* be played as a pure text game (one might want to do so for an instant in the name of nostalgia). The graphics are so good they are easily mistaken for VGA at first glance. The artist, Tanya Isaacson, should get an award for betwitching every newt's eye of potential out of the EGA graphic mode. This jaded reviewer is impressed by the *manner* in which the graphics are handled in the game. Rather than emphasizing the graphics as in common adventures, the graphics screens in *Spellcasting 101* are gravy. They make no attempt to show the entire location in one shot







nor all of the objects therein. They provide flavor, in a non-essential supporting role, for the well-written prose. They are also interactive. What objects *do* appear in the window can be clicked on once for an instant LOOK command or clicked twice to evoke an obvious operation like TAKE for objects or OPEN for doors.

Another nice graphic and storytelling touch is the division of the game into chapters, each with an artsy chapter-heading screen with baroque borders and hilariously appropriate quotes from the most quotable figures (Ambrose Bierce and Yogi Berra among them). It gives the game a literary feel and gives one an added feeling of accomplishment in addition to the point-scoring system.

It's clear that the game's graphics were developed around the story rather than the converse, as in most adventures. Rather than worrying about memory limitations and artist costs, this design philosophy would seem to allow the designers more flexibility and afford them the chance to think story first, frills second. While competing adventures sacrifice verbal description for graphics, the Legend people have not lost sight of the fact that, in adventure games, words pack more imagination-piquing punch than pixels.

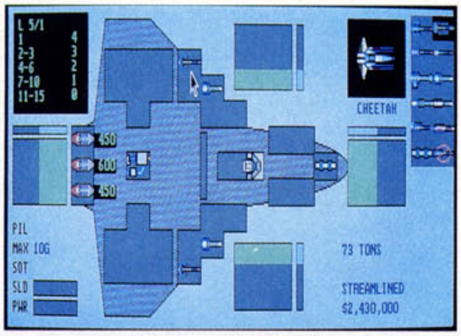
>PUT THE PRAISEWORTHY PURPLE PARSER INTO THE PUZZLING PROGRAM

Spellcasting 101 boasts a parser that is leaps and bounds better than anything currently on the market. Bob Bates, producer and head cheese at Legend has taken his experience (though none of the code, he assures us) with Infocom's excellent ZIL parser system and has created an interpreter with a lexicon and parsing ability that blows away anything **Sierra** or **Accolade** is currently doing *[Ed: Contact Bob on this one.* CGW *does not need to find itself in the middle of a parser war]*. To aid the adventurer further, the game offers two ways to interact with the world. Players either type commands in the usual manner, or they can choose appropriate verbs, prepositions, and nouns from an extensive menu of words.

>READ MENU AND ORDER THE GRUE FLANK STEAK

This menu selection system is touted as a great advance in the genre. I was skeptical at first, however, fearing that the menu system would limit players to an oversimplified repertoire of com-

(Continued on page 94)



Interceptor (SSI)



Buck Rogers (SSI)

Buying Guide

(Continued from page 8)

than the *film noir* style in **Dynamix**' *Rise of the Dragon* (IBM, $59.95). Both games use interfaces where the player touches a location portrayed on the screen and clicks (on the mouse or keyboard) and the scene resolves into a new perspective based on a subsequent location. If a player clicks on a door, for instance, the next view would likely be of a room just entered. If a player clicks on an object, that object may be seen in a close-up view and/or manipulated by the player. This "player as director"-style interface may be the wave of the future and science fiction gamers should be very interested in both of these games. The stories have some rich science fiction conventions in them, as well.

Horror fans may prefer the "point and click" B-movie thrills of *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* from **Accolade** (IBM, Amiga, ST, $64.95). The game features "real-time" hand-to-hand combat, but also contains mental stimulation for more traditional adventure gamers, as well. Players use a scroll of magical spells and ingredients for potions (garnered throughout the ancestral castle Elvira is trying to renovate) in order to create magical brews.

BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge from **Infocom** (see sneak preview on p. 36) is the sequel to *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception*. It probably has more to offer to those who like to play the *BattleTech* boardgame from **FASA** than to narrative-oriented role-playing enthusiasts.

SSI's *Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday* (IBM, Amiga, $49.95, C-64, $39.95) appears to integrate story and combat fairly successfully. Tactical wargamers, as well as hackers and slashers, will probably enjoy the options to be found in the new *Buck Rogers* combat system more than any of the previous gold box series from **SSI** and the artwork in each of these games continues to offer more with every release.

Speaking of a game series where the artwork continues to improve, **Access Software**'s *Countdown* (IBM with hard

(Continued on page 98)

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Star Control *Strategy and Tactics*

by Paul Reiche III, Designer

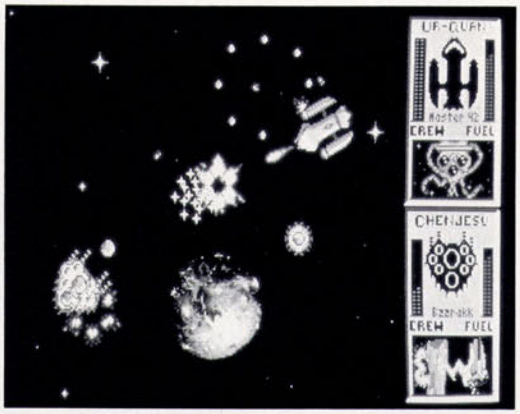
Although it is unusual for CGW to print strategy articles before actually reviewing a computer game, we believe that Star Control is exciting and challenging enough that our readers will not want to wait for these insightful observations from the designer of the game.

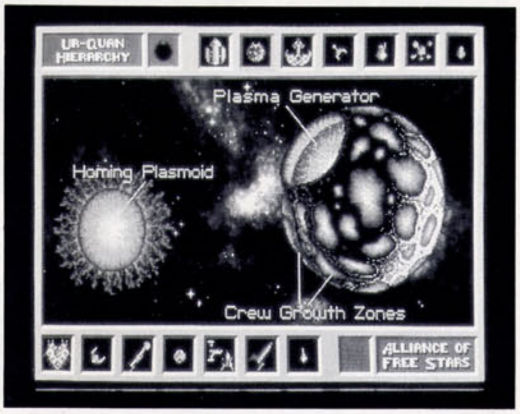
This article provides *Star Control* players with part one of a detailed "How-To" guide for the ship-to-ship, tactical combat aspects of the game, as well as some suggestions and recommendations for strategic play in the Full Game. *Star Control*, published by **Accolade**, is exactly what Fred Ford and I set out to create 18 months ago, a hybrid action-strategy game which puts the squeeze on both your higher brain and your adrenal glands.

For those of you familiar with my previous works (*Archon*, *Adept*, and *Mail Order Monsters*), the basic design goals in the creation of Star Control will come as no great surprise; namely, to combine and pace action with strategy to give the player a "full-body" experience of facing conflict and overcoming challenges.

I am not one to over-analyze games, especially my own. There are four principles that I want from games which I design. First, that they be fun, with no excuses about how the game simulates the agony and dreariness of the real world (as though this was somehow good for you). Second, that they be challenging over a long period of time, preferably with a few ability "plateaus" that let me feel in control for a period of time, then blow me out of the water. Third, that they be attractive. I am a sucker for a nice illustration or a funky riff. Finally, I want my games to be conceptually interesting and thought-provoking, so one can discuss the game with an adult and not feel silly.







Ship Tips

The Hierarchy and Alliance fleets are not equal, though in the hands of an experienced player, they have equivalent overall strength. In general, Hierarchy ships are strong, slow, relatively simple to use, and *deadly* at close range. On the other hand, Alliance vessels tend to be weaker in terms of crew and raw firepower, but are more nimble and possess weapons/special ability combinations whose offense/defense capacities are more flexible than their Hierarchy counterparts. With either fleet, the key to winning is to know the strengths of your ships and the weaknesses of your opponent's.

The Hierarchy Fleet

The Ur-Quan Dreadnought is the strongest and most expensive ship in the game. Don't ram it into a planet, or close with a ship that has powerful short-range weapons. In the Full Game, you may want to keep the Dreadnought near or on a colony, so that it can quickly restore any crew lost in battle.

Each fighter launched represents a departing crew member, so don't send off all but the last few of your crew if the ship is crippled. Doing so risks defeat through a single, lucky enemy shot. Also, fighters expire if you don't let them return to your ship. Thus, avoid high-speed chases or your fighters could be left far behind. Finally, for experienced opponents, fighters are usually only a diversionary nuisance from long range. Use fighters at short range, in concert with your main weapon, for best results.

Against most ships, the **Mycon Podship** is a dead duck if it sits still. Once it gets moving (a good Gravity Whip works), its commander can kick back, fire a plasma torpedo now and then, and regenerate any damage that comes his way. The most serious flaw to this tactic is the presence of the planet. To give yourself time to respond to an onrushing celestial body, avoid diagonal whip trajectories.

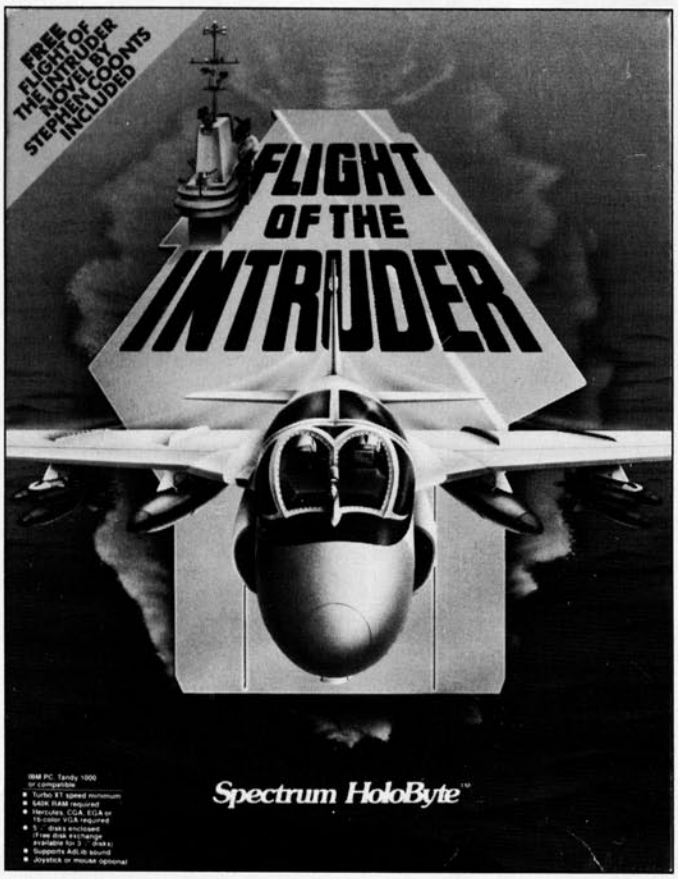
One of the most serious threats to the Mycon is its own weapon, the expanding plasma cloud. Fast ships, like the Arilou, Shofixti, or Syreen will try to lure the plasma weapon back upon the Mycon, especially if it is cooperating by staying in one spot. Alternately, if the Mycon is moving at or beyond its normal maximum velocity (due to a high-speed collision or a skillful Gravity Whip), it can overrun its own weapon immediately after launch, suffering grievous casual-

(Continued on page 58)

CHASING DEMONS . . . AND MIGS

Spectrum HoloByte's Flight of the Intruder

by Paul Rigby



"The impact of the Intruder upon the North Vietnamese was significant. Some measure of the effectiveness of the new airplane can be gained by a Radio Hanoi broadcast on April 20 1966 when the North Vietnamese hotly claimed that the Americans were using B-52 heavy bombers against the population centers of the country. In truth, the strike [against the Uong Bi power plant] was accomplished by two Intruders."

—Mersky & Polmar, *The Naval Air War in Vietnam.*

Flight of the Intruder, developed by UK software house **Rowan Software** for **Spectrum HoloByte,** supports the Grumman A-6 Intruder and McDonnell Douglas F-4B/J Phantom II flight models. It is set in the heated skies of Vietnam, just before the Linebacker campaign in 1972 that took place over North Vietnam. The object is to complete assigned missions with minimum loss. However, while previous games allowed the player to simply look after his/her own survival, *Intruder* forces the player to consider wingmen, as well as other flights accompanying one on the mission. In fact, players control and direct up to eight aircraft in any one mission. This is because any combat mission, whether it be over Vietnam or anywhere else, needs support if it is to be successful. This is the area where *Intruder* differs from the majority of flight simulators. So, one flight (of two aircraft) may be assigned the bomb run, another flight may be anti-SAM, another anti-aircraft, escort, etc. Getting one aircraft safely home may be challenging enough for some players, but juggling eight aircraft in the SAM / MiG / AAA-filled skies of North Vietnam is a surefire recipe for an incredible challenge.

TITLE:	Flight of the Intruder
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
DEVELOPER:	Rowan Software
PUBLISHER:	Spectrum HoloByte Alameda, CA

Upon loading (check out the magnificent carrier launch introductory sequence), *Intruder* offers the player a choice from three distinct sections. The first area ("Scramble") offers a chance to repeat the previous mission, a handy option for those who may have just botched up an assignment, but don't want the hassle of resetting the configuration, tactics, weapons, orders, etc. in order to play it again. The next area is split into two and will form the basis of most people's first look at the game mechanics. Called "Phantom" and "Intruder Pilot Brief," these sections allow players to fly their first missions as a tutorial.

Carrier Pigeons (The Command Option)

However, the main section of *Intruder* is the "CAG" (Commander Air Group) option. On selection of this option, the player becomes the CAG who, in turn, must choose a primary mission (anything from attacking the dreaded Than Hoi bridge to hitting torpedo boats). Then, a secondary mission is selected from about six or seven sites around the main target. At this juncture, the CAG designates the weapons for each flight and investigates basic intelligence for any area on the game map of Vietnam.

It is also possible to change the crews of each aircraft. This is an excellent feature which forces one into making personnel management decisions—an essential responsibility of all CAGs. So, one must be certain that each crew is up to the job assigned to them by considering their individual ratings for such functions as Wild Weasel (anti-SAM), fatigue factor, dogfighting, etc. One has to take extra care of one's men, too, because *Intruder* replaces lost personnel with green recruits.

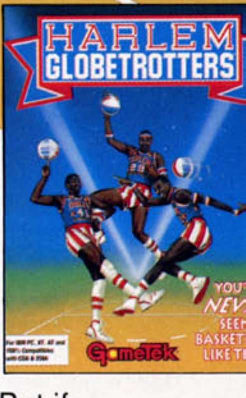
Waypoints are *extremely* important in *Intruder*. They are the hinge that can determine the success or failure of a mission in both real life *and* the simulation—a pat on the back to **Rowan** and **Spectrum HoloByte** for getting this right. In this case, the CAG can tell each flight exactly when they can take off, what course to take (right down to exact latitudes and longitudes),

(Continued on page 40)

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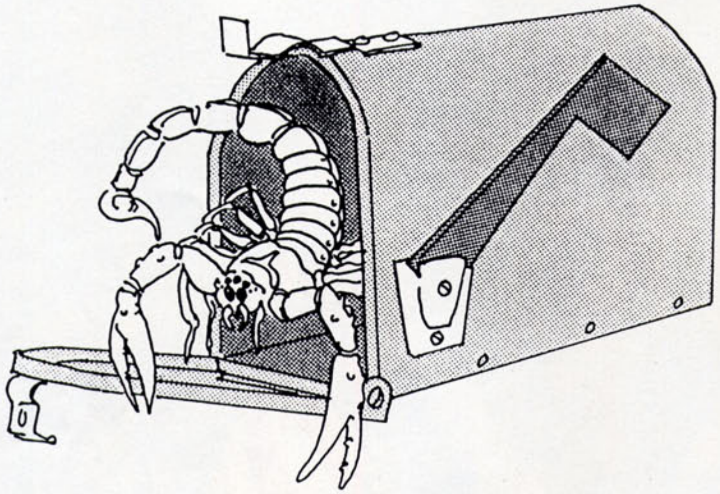


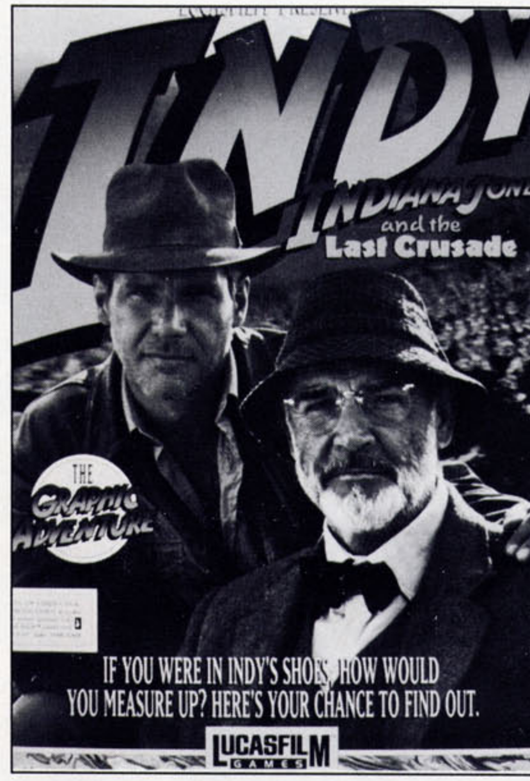
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Scorpion's Mail





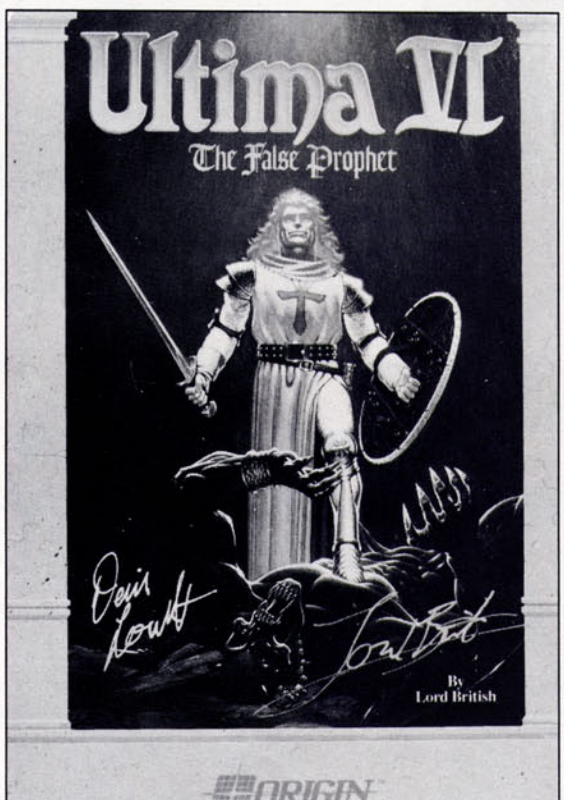
Look at that, it's time to pop into the back room again. Seems like we were just here only a little while ago. Ah well, they say time flies when you're having fun (although I have another way of describing being buried under mail sacks, heh).

In addition to the usual requests for assistance with games, people have been asking all sorts of (ahem) personal questions. Such as: how many letters a week do you get? Do you get paid for answering them? When is CGW going to give you a raise? Why don't they print your picture with the column?

I suppose they want answers (sigh). Ok, here they are: I don't really count the number of letters that come in, but a rough estimate is between 40-60 a month, a bit more when new games come out, and a bit less at other times (like the depths of summer, when nothing new is out). This summer, however, has been out of the ordinary, with more mail than usual.

No, I don't get paid for answering the letters; it's something I do on my own, to help out fellow gamers. Yeah, when *is* CGW gonna give me a raise? (Oh, Russ . . . .). As for my picture, well, the camera hasn't been made yet that could survive the ordeal (grin).

Anyway, enough fluff, let's get down to the real stuff.

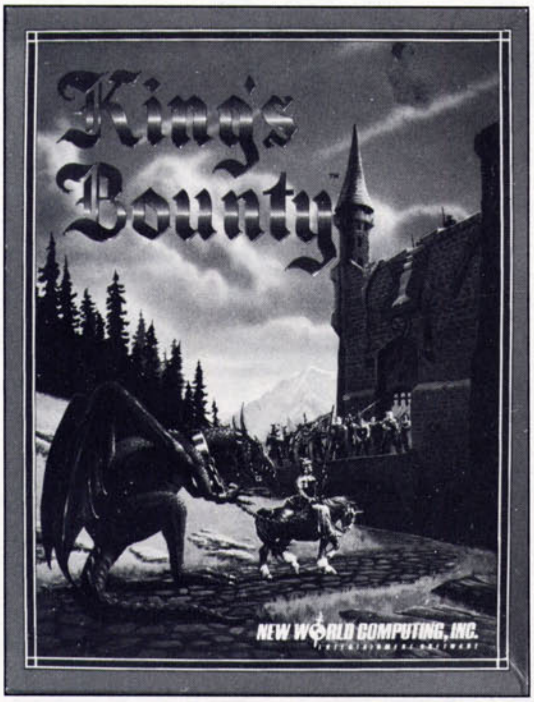


Knights of Legend: Lately, people have been writing and asking about training. Mainly, they want to increase weapon skills, but can't find anyone to train them. There's a reason for this: all weapon skills have a limit (which varies by weapon type and character class). When you reach that limit, you simply can't train any further in that weapon. There are nine trainers in the game: Brettle, the tower outside Brettle, Htron (2), Shellernoon, the keep on the Krell Way, Olanthen, the Kvlar forest, and the Portal. If none of them will train you in a weapon, it's time to move on to another weapon. That's all there is to it.

Dragon Wars: Some folks have been wondering if it is possible to obtain all the spells listed in the manual. The answer is no, you can't. Most of them you can get, but there are one or two which just "ain't there." Don't worry about it, though, you can complete the game without them. Another problem for some players relates to the frozen Dwarves in the Dwarf Hall. Look closely: they've been petrified (stoned, in a way). What do you suppose you could do about that? (I'd give more of a hint, but I'm not that soft).

Indiana Jones & The Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure: It seems that a few adventurers are having difficulties in the catacombs below Venice. Specifically, there is a large area of water they'd like to get past, but can't find a way to do so. Well, you'll have to pull the plug from below.

(Continued on page 88)



A Feast for Some

New World's King's Bounty

by Alan Emrich



TITLE:	King's Bounty
SYSTEMS:	Apple II, IBM
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNER:	Jon Van Caneghem
PUBLISHER:	New World Computing Van Nuys, CA

Some people go to a new high-rise building and want to explore everything on every floor; some just want to go there to conduct their business; and others just want to visit the rooftop and see the view. It is for this latter group that *King's Bounty* was designed by Jon Van Caneghem (of *Might & Magic* fame). A straight-through adventure game, it is akin to climbing a flight of stairs (with no turning to the left or right) in order to reach the top and find oneself satisfied with the view. More than simply a destination, however, *King's Bounty* is also a lively, quick-paced journey for the strategy-minded adventure gamer.

The Story So Far

Well, this time it's not *all* the Ultimate Bad Guy's (UBG's) fault. Arech Dragonbreath is only one of 17 villains who stole the good king's Sceptre of Order and buried it. *Each* of the villains has a piece of the puzzle map to its secret location, but Dragonbreath has the critical center piece. Without the retrieval of the Sceptre, chaos, evil and nastiness will prevail throughout the land and, worse yet, the player will lose the game.

Party Of Six? Forget It!

King's Bounty is a game of *armies*. The player has to recruit soldiery from lands (where peasants, pikemen, knights, wolves, barbarians and more can be found), hills (where orcs, dwarves, giants, dragons and more dwell), forests (in search of elves, trolls, etc.) and dungeons (where demons and undead abound). There are no "adventures" in these areas, as they are presented for recruitment only. A player maneuvers an army of five units, where each unit consists of a number of troops of one type (for example, 28 nomads is one unit), through numerous overland encounters and in "sieges" of upwards of 17 castles.

Heroes Wanted

King's Bounty offers but four character classes for the player to choose from: Knight, Paladin, Barbarian and Sorceress. Each is rated for speed of character advancement, maximum number of spells the character may know, spell power, base commission per week (troops have to be paid each week) and leadership (how large the units which the player commands can be). Early on, leadership seems to be the key, because the battles often go to the side with more "staying power" (or as the wargamers say, the "bigger battalions"). While they all need to climb the exact same set of stairs to reach the top, each class uses different muscles along the way.

Setting Out, Oh Great Leader

One's character starts out at the head of a small army. Fortunately, the story is built in such a way that lesser encounters occur first, with more vicious ones undiscoverable early on. Players trash countless wandering armies of bad guys across all four continents of the realm, while exploring the map (complete with a handy automapping feature) in search of towns, castles, treasures and recruitment areas (each bearing its own rewards).

Towns offer a quick list of five items for a player to select from. A player can pick up a "contract" to off the next villain in the line of 17. Then, if that villain's castle is successfully besieged, the villain is captured, a piece of the map to the Sceptre is recovered and the player earns megabooty. To go up a level, a character must snag from 1-3 villains (depending on the character's class). Subsequent levels require 5-8 more villains, with final advancement in another 10-14 captures. Captured castles may also be "garrisoned" by one of the player's army units, which will generate extra weekly income for the player.

Also at towns, players may hire the boat. The boat gets one's forces across the waters and between the continents. It is very practical (from a time standpoint, as this is a "race the clock" game) to hire the boat. Towns might also know who lives in nearby castles and each town sells its distinctive "town spell" (one of the 14 different spells in the game). Finally, the player can shell out the big bucks to pick up siege equipment, allowing him to attack castles.

Storyline = Straightline + Punchline

The straight, linear storyline of *King's Bounty* is an easy and familiar device (which was also recently used in **Mindcraft**'s *The Keys To Maramon*). While this will leave *Ultima* devotees wondering where the challenge is, not everyone wants to play an adventure of that scope every time they sit down at a computer. This reviewer spent around six enjoyable hours climbing straight up the stairs of its storyline and was rewarded with the "end screen payoff." What keeps this game from becoming too monotonous are these three elements: serious time pressure, nail-biting battles, and expanding megalomania.

The time pressure is inherent in the scenario. Chaos will come upon the lands unless the player can unearth the Sceptre before the requisite number of days passes. With each space entered consuming a preset amount of time, every wasted move is paid

(Continued on page 78)

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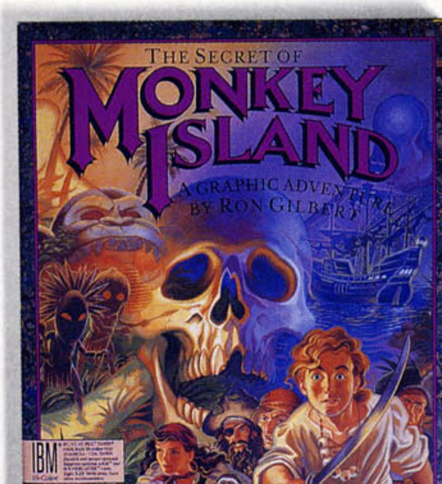
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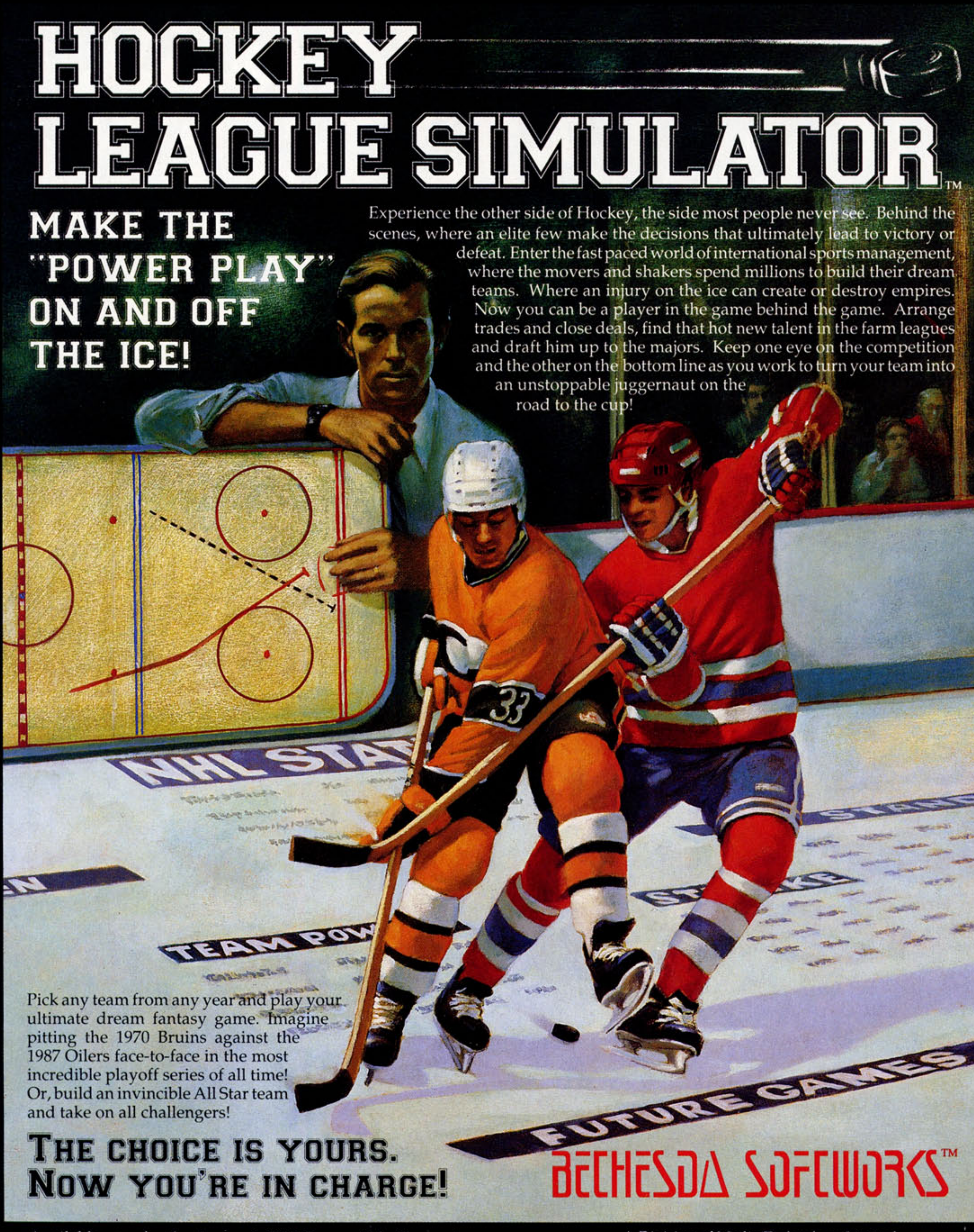


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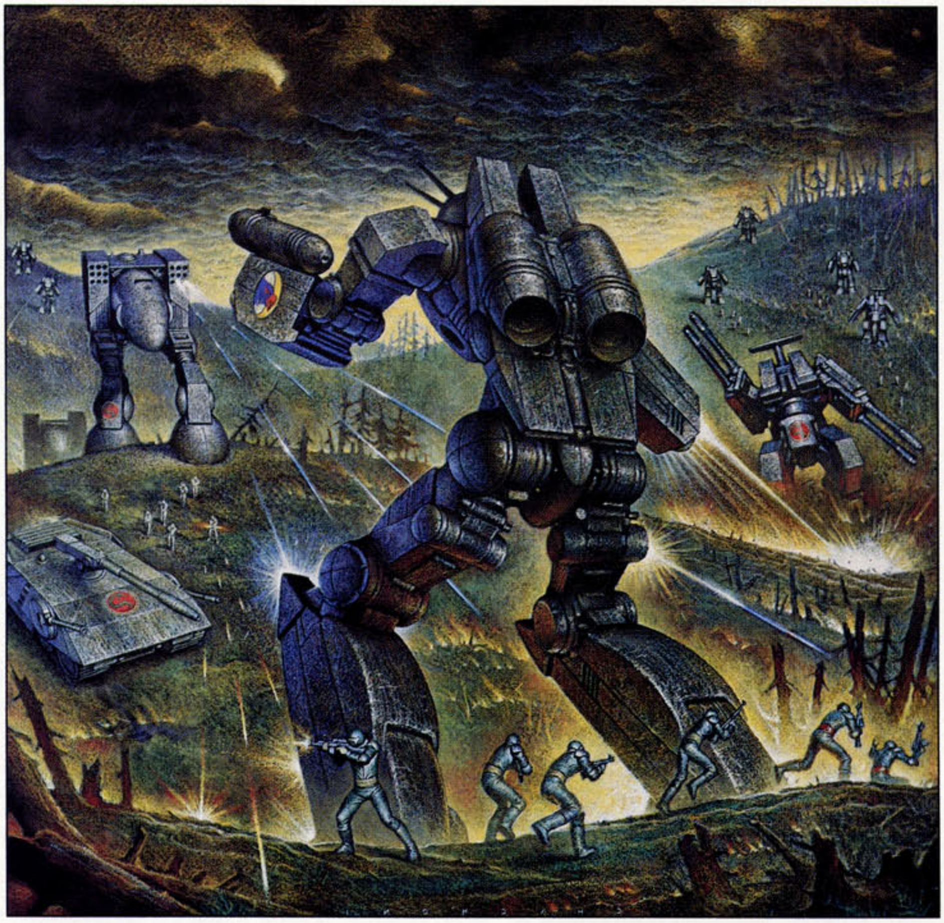
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« Circle Reader Service #15 »

Sneak Preview:

Infocom's BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge

by Wyatt Lee and J. D. Lambright



Pacifica, October 3028: Jason Youngblood, son of famed Phoenix Hawk pilot Jeremiah Youngblood, has just received word that Morgan Kell (legendary leader of the famed Kellhounds) has vital information concerning the whereabouts of his father, a prisoner of war in the Draconis Combine (House Kurita). Jason, a MechWarrior trained in the Lyran Commonwealth (House Steiner), intends to land at the Kellhound base and initiate his plans for a rescue mission.

Infocom's *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* sounds like a role-playing game, but is actually more like a tactical-level wargame with six scenarios strung together via a storyline set in the *BattleTech* universe (designed by **FASA** for its boardgame and novels). Those who are accustomed to playing the boardgame or slugging it out in miniatures battles using the *BattleTech* rules should feel right at home with this game. Those who are looking forward to landing on planets, encountering fascinating aliens, discovering unique artifacts and solving puzzles had best stay away. The story does *not* progress via conversational encounters, exploration or skill enhancement.

Rather, it consists of commanding one's squad of 'mechs (those multi-ton humanoid engines of destruction — inspired by Japanimation like *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* and *Fang of the Sun Dougram* — that look like giant robots, but are piloted by a gifted warrior elite) in firefights with differing mixes of opposing 'mechs and combat objectives. These battles alternate with colorful static screens which feature full-screen portraits of men, 'mechs and locations, along with short paragraphs of text that advance the story. Hardcore 'mech pilots can jump over these static screens if they desire, so the primary focus of the game is duplicating the multi-unit actions of the boardgame on the computer monitor.

Take Command

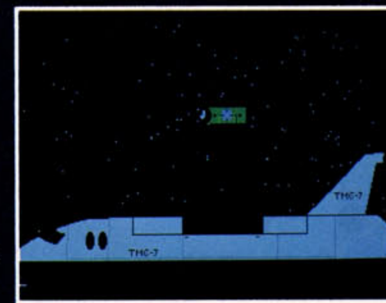
The game begins with a "story so far" overview. Next, the player gets a choice of four 'mechs from a pool of six different machines (a Wasp, Commando, Hermes II, Phoenix Hawk, and a Griffin). To insure flexibility, the player must choose four *different* types from the six 'mechs available in this pool at the start of the game.

Controls are joystick, keyboard, or mouse-driven using a cursor on the battlefield and menu on the side of the screen. The player uses these controls to direct movement, weapon fire, unit speed and the entire squad's formation. The controls are pretty similar to those utilized in *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception* (*Inception*), but things can get fairly complicated when the player is trying to control up to three 'mechs at a time. In the early versions *CGW* received, one had to click onto a specific unit (moving the cursor by joystick, keyboard or mouse), and then move to the menu to command the unit. This meant that the command sequence would often be interrupted (slowed down) when the battle got hot and the messages from other 'mechs started to come in fast and furious.

There are some significant differences between *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* (*Revenge*) and its predecessor (*Inception*), however. Movement *must* consist of moving the cursor and clicking on four different "legs" of movement during the turn. In *Inception*, the player had considerably more control during each phased movement. If one is not careful, particularly in the first scenario, one can move past the target 'mech and miss the shot without realizing it. Second, combat takes place in a real-time setting, unlike the phased move-

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ment (preferable to role-players and wargamers) utilized in the first game. Third, since the game does not emphasize the "role-playing" experience of the game, it does not offer the option of allowing the computer to fight for the player which *Inception* provided. Fourth, *Revenge* is a linear entertainment in which the protagonist's goals are clearly outlined for him. There is none of the "wasted time" dedicated to discovery and exploration that was required in *Inception*. The *best news* is that *Revenge* has superior VGA graphics and characters that do not look like cheap imitations of Japanime'; is much faster-paced than *Inception*; and is the kind of game that offers replayability where *Inception* did not. *Revenge* also offers some on-screen hints whenever the player fails.

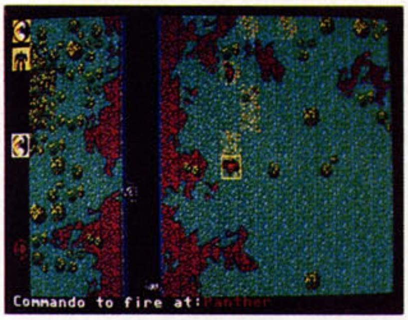
Verify Situation

Just before the action begins in *Revenge*, Jason Youngblood's ship is strafed by Kurita fighters and, as a result, forced to crash land into a lake, rather than reaching the Kellhound base he was bound for. As Jason, the player finds that two of his available 'mechs have already filled with water and sunk to the bottom of the lake. So, he only has two 'mechs potentially available for his use. While he is still trying to get out of the water, he observes another 'mech who has already been damaged by enemy fire. Jason must help out the damaged Jenner in his battle with a Kurita Locust, because the Kurita 'mech will immediately start firing at Jason's ship, should the Jenner be defeated. Should this occur, the game is quickly and unsuccessfully completed. Thus, the basic challenge of the first scenario is to destroy the Kurita 'mech or cause it to retreat.

Next, one offloads the two 'mechs from the ship and attempts to secure the road to the Kellhound base where are hero originally intended to land. Now, the player controls three 'mechs. Because of the real-time constraints, however, he controls these 'mechs loosely. It is difficult to get all three 'mechs to triangulate on one target because, at least in the unfinished version *CGW* was experimenting with, the computer tends to "take over" command of those units one is not actively commanding at a given time. Obviously, this has both advantages and disadvantages. With the computer commanding the units, one can be relatively sure that all units stay in the action, but coordination becomes a nightmare. Basically, both the second and third scenarios are essentially "run and gun" road battles to protect the base. The "good guys" chase off a larger force which includes a Whitworth and an APC, among others.

In the third scenario, the small 'mech force faces a much larger force of three Rommel tanks (extremely tough opponents) and a couple of 'mechs. By this time, the player has learned one of the most important lessons of the game, the "good guys" are always outmanned and outgunned. The primary objective of the third scenario is to keep the tanks from







crossing the bridge and reaching the base.

The fourth scenario offers a slightly different challenge, an escort mission. There are two essential phases to this scenario. The hero begins in the city and loads two different types of weapons into his cargo carrier in order to deliver them back to the base. One essentially controls two urban 'mechs in a running battle against Kurita infantry, while attempting to protect the delivery at any cost. There is also a random encounter in which the party can be strafed by Kurita fighters. Finally, one has to drive past a 'mech guarding the city gate in order to exit the city.

Unfortunately, the early draft of the documentation does not delineate the functions and characteristics of an urban 'mech, even though the player is required to command two of them in the fourth scenario. This is somewhat analogous to the fact that four of the six 'mechs in the player's starting pool have "jump jet" capacity. Jump jets that would enable the 'mechs to fly behind enemy lines would have been extremely valuable in some scenarios. Nevertheless, the program (at least, in our version) makes no allowances for using them.

The fifth scenario is introduced via a static-screen exposition of a huge party where the hero and his fellow warriors are the guests of the Kellhounds. Here, the hero gets to meet the famous Morgan Kell. He also gets to thank "Grease Anderson," the pilot of the damaged 'mech in the first scenario, for saving his bolts in that scenario. All the 'mechwarriors have a good laugh at the hero's expense, however, because "Grease" turns out to have been a 'tech, not a 'mech pilot. He simply jumped into a 'mech at a crucial time in order to help out. Right after the party, and a good night's rest, Jason comes up with a heroic plan. The Kellhounds help him salvage his two waterlogged 'mechs from the bottom of the lake, so Jason volunteers to breach the Kurita lines and march directly on the bad guys' mobile headquarters. The commander has a better idea (and this means most players will want to save the game here and replay the scenario). The commander orders Youngblood to choose two light 'mechs (Javelins) to flank the Kurita lines. Then, the other 'mechs are to attempt a frontal assault. In this way, one group should be able to get through to the mobile headquarters in fairly decent shape. Players have the choice of commanding either group, so this is not only an interesting scenario, but a *double* scenario. "Road Run" gives the player a chance to flank the enemy with the light 'mechs and "Gauntlet" gives the heavier units a chance to breach the line and go for the enemy's throat.

As a sideline, however, here is another game universe anomaly. Prior to the fifth scenario, the commander allows Jason to have the missiles which he brought

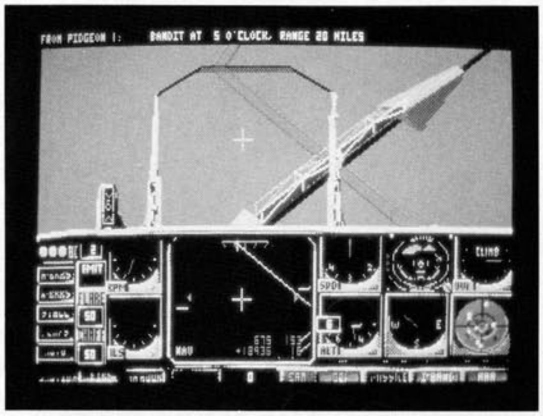
(Continued on page 92)

CHASING DEMONS . . . AND MIGS

(Continued from page 28)

what to do on the way there (fly in combat or cruise formation, jink, etc), what height to fly at and what time they should reach a particular waypoint. This means that players should be able to coordinate an attack that will flow like poetry in motion, with timed attacks right down to the last second. Wonderful stuff.

Target information takes the form of some basic data provided as to its position and description. Sometimes, the player even gets a black & white photo of the target. This can be very useful. It might even prevent one from hitting the wrong bridge during the heat of battle.



Phantom of the Flattop (The Flight Model)

After taking off from the carrier, one sees a wingman close up and get into formation. The other flights will take off according to the timetable allotted them in the command option (this section can be hurried along via an Accelerated Time feature). Once everybody's up and running, the player has the option of easily switching between aircraft and taking control. Since it is possible to do this at any time, one can always manage to be in the thick of the action. In fact, it is necessary to do this if one wishes to take the maximum credit and points for an operation. If one gains enough points, he/she is awarded an operations badge for that strike. Medals are also possible if one has done enough to earn one. Naturally, the difficulty factor increases depending upon the rank chosen by the player.

The flight models have been well implemented. The F-4 Phantom feels like a combat fighter. It produces and retains "energy" or speed more successfully than the Intruder. The Intruder feels like a flying whale at times and has a tendency to stall. So, both "planes" offer distinctive flight characteristics, quirks and authentic avionics in a commendable implementation. For example, the AIM-7 Sparrow air-to-air missile was in its initial development cycle during Vietnam. It was infamous for its lack of reliability. Thus, the success-to-failure ratio for the Sparrow reflects this unreliability. In addition, the software supplies a Rules of Engagement option which submits players to the same crippling flight conditions experienced by all US pilots in Vietnam.

Other elements include the very smoky J79 engines on the F-4 Phantom. Check out the external viewpoints to see this feature has been included. Also, watch the smoke disappear once the afterburner is engaged—again, true to real life.

(Continued on page 48)

Military Intelligence Report

For a flight simulation on the scale of the epic Vietnam conflict, research is paramount. Especially so, considering the technology involved. To capture as realistic a feel for this era of combat as possible, **Rowan Software**'s project leader, Rod Hyde, travelled to California.

"I spent three days with a chap called Norman Cosand who flew as a back-seater in the Vietnam war on F-4s. He used to fly it, too. The front seaters used to let the back-seaters fly on the way to a mission and on the way back to give them some experience and to give the chap in the front time to write his notes up so he could go straight to the bar when he landed!"

According to Hyde, Cosand provided valuable information on bomb runs and general aspects of flying the F-4 as well as the tactics and maps. In addition, Norman supplied three audio tapes of missions. A couple were missions he went on. The other tape offered an example of some very dramatic action, "In one case you can hear the last five or ten minutes of a F-4 pilot and co-pilot who'd got themselves a damaged plane. You can hear the whole rescue system. Another F-4 comes up and flies alongside and goes around giving him damage status. This particular one is a sad sequence. In the very early F-4s, if the back-seater punched out first, there was a pressure set-up such that the front-seater couldn't punch out—and that's what happened in this case. So they only got one of the chaps out."

Rod described a second sequence where an inexperienced fighter pilot sees some MiGs below him. You can hear the chatter as he's trying to persuade his leader to let him go down.

The flight leader refuses permission as they are nothing to do with the mission in hand. In the end it is just too great a temptation so he goes down, by himself, " . . . you can hear that he is suddenly outnumbered—and that's the end of him. You tend to listen to these tapes in total silence."

Action sequences such as these provided much needed atmosphere and "real-life" details for the simulated "radio chatter" for the program. During the multi-flight CAG option of *Flight of the Intruder*, players will see *lots* of radio chatter (some of it having no bearing on the player's aircraft).

Gilman Louie, **Spectrum HoloByte**'s CEO was able to provide much of the information on the A-6 (performance and weapon data, etc) along with direct help from Stephen Coonts himself. Coonts was able to contribute help on bombing techniques and MIL depression advice for bombing.

One of the late additions to the Intruder was the rudder option, as Hyde notes: "It is not a full rudder implementation—there's no effect on pitch, for example. It was something we added right at the end to help in the carrier landings because, as the carrier moves it is quite a difficult task to line yourself up. The rudder is a heading change only.

"We really didn't want to put a rudder in *Intruder* as we felt that a rudder is more important on a WW2 fighter than a Phantom. You'll find it very difficult to do a stall-turn in an F-4. Although you can tail-slide like the MiG-29 did at Farnborough."

Many players will find the rudder to be not only a useful addition while landing, but when lining up a target for attack, as well. Attacking the Than Hoi bridge with Laser Guided Bombs, for example, was eased by the rudder-based course changes. But a tail-slide? Hmmm—that would take some doing!





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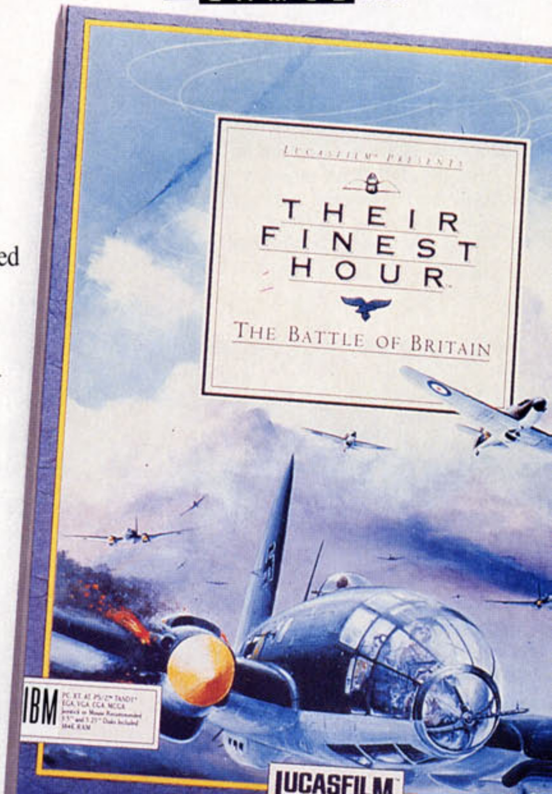
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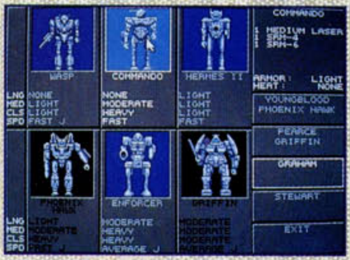


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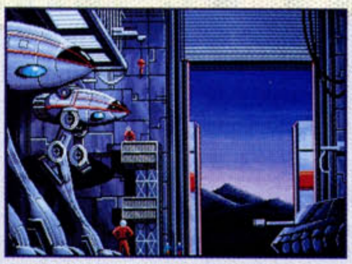
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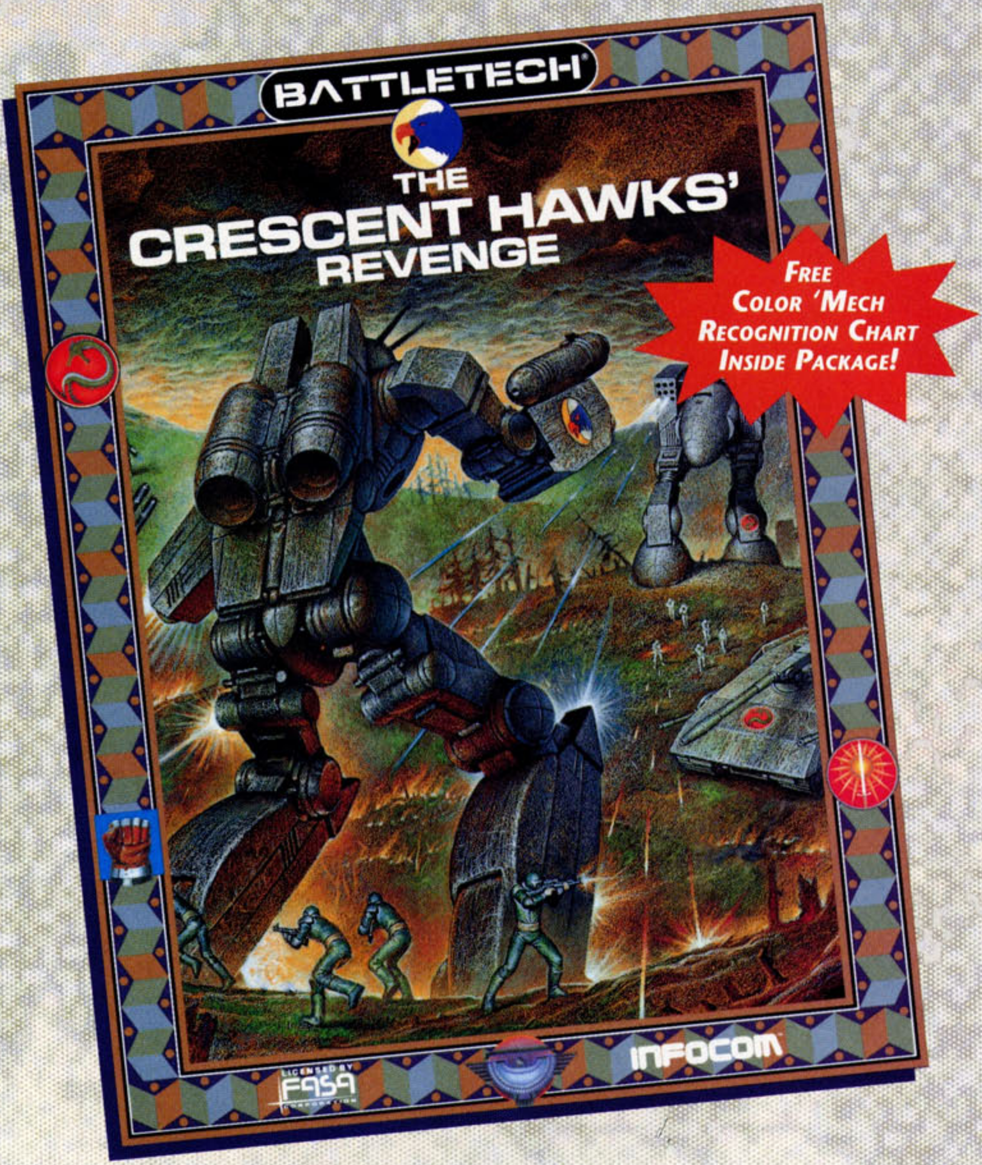


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« Circle Reader Service #52 » *Circle Reader Service #21*

Scorpion's View

Are CRPGs Role-Playing Games?

A couple of years or so ago (*CGW* #38), I surveyed the computer role-playing (CRPG) genre, from its inception to its current state. At that time, I came to the conclusion that while the games themselves had become more sophisticated in many ways, they hadn't really changed much since the early days. In particular, the lack of true role-playing was evident.

Now, several years later, some progress has been made, but role-playing remains a limited feature. It is time to take an in-depth look at why this is so, why role-playing is difficult to integrate into a CRPG, and why it is unlikely that role-playing in CRPGs will change very much in the near future.

First let's take a look at the live RPG. This is played by a DM (there are many titles for the person who runs things, but DM is the best known) and a group of people, usually somewhere between 5-10 in number, who take on the roles of the player-characters, or PCs (all other characters, as well as monsters, being played by the DM).

One way or another (royal proclamations, posted notices, mysterious persons at the local tavern, etc.) the DM introduces the PCs to the basic scenario and the action begins. So far, this sounds pretty much like a typical CRPG, with the program as DM and one person (instead of many) playing all the PCs. This similarity, however, is deceptive.

PCs in an RPG are *not* just sets of ambulatory statistics, hacking their way past all opposition to the ultimate goal. Rather, each PC has a definite personality, complete with likes and dislikes, unique motivations, and his/her own perceptions of the world. How these distinct individuals interact with each other and the world of the adventure is the basis for role-playing.

It is immediately obvious from this that live games do not always run smoothly, as far as progressing towards a common goal is concerned. There will be arguments over what course of action to take in particular circumstances or how to treat certain NPCs (non-player characters, run by the DM), maybe even what way treasure is to be shared among the party. Indeed, an entire session could pass with little or no combat, as the PCs engage in discussion, argument, negotiation, diplomacy, bribery, gathering information, and sneaking around.

Further, it is usually the case that the PCs will do something the DM has not expected or allowed for, at which point the DM has to do some fast thinking and decision-making. Depending on the circumstances, the party may find themselves with a completely new adventure on their hands or the DM may think of a way to fudge around the deviation and get the group back on track (or at least prevent the campaign from coming to an abrupt end *[Ed. Note: I have a standard line I use in these situations: "Normally that would work. However..."]*).

Finally, most DMs write their own scenarios. That is, even if they buy a module (or "canned adventure") at the local store, they will modify it as they see fit. Thus, each scenario is individualized by the DM to take into account the PCs personality quirks, abilities, and general style of play, so that each adventure is custom-designed for a particular group of players.

Having had a look at some of the factors in the "real thing," we can now go back and examine how these factors are translated to the CRPG. First, however large the adventuring party, the individual members are run by one person. It's possible, of course, for several people to gather round the monitor and direct the actions of individual characters, but for the most part, CRPGs are a solo endeavor.

> **"The golden mean for [NPC] combat lies somewhere between the rigid and the reckless."**

Much of the role-playing element is lost right there. As anyone with experience in live gaming can tell you, a lot of the fun comes from PC interaction. There is no way, right now, that a CRPG can simulate this with any reasonable degree of accuracy, for several reasons.

Constructing detailed personalities requires a lot of time, and time is often in short supply. Further, there is no good way to simulate any sort of realistic conversation. The *Ultimas* are the best of the lot, and even there, the player does no more than feed back key words to the various NPCs who, in turn, provide whatever information they happen to have. Menu-ized conversations, with their "pick something to say from the following list", are no better.

This is why, in one respect, the CRPGs tend to have a mechanical feel to them. The player, as he/she progresses through the game, builds up a list of keywords and tries them out on every NPC that comes along. It becomes a rote action and, if there are a lot of people to talk to, can descend into tedium. Every conversation becomes pretty much the same, a static exchange of words that seems to go on forever.

Since this rules out conversation as a medium of role-playing, the only thing left is action and action is typically limited to buying/selling items, stealing (or not stealing), and combat.

Dealing with merchants in most games is routine. Prices are fixed for both new items you purchase and used items you want to sell. On occasion, it is possible to haggle a little, but for the most part, buying and selling has nothing to do with role-playing.

Stealing (or not stealing) shows up in some, although not all, games. It is, for instance, a prominent feature in the later *Ultimas*, where your character's Avatar rating goes up or down depending on whether or not you're honest. People who want to play dishonest characters tend to have a hard time with the *Ultimas*, since it is necessary to be "good" in order to finish.

In other games that allow pilfering, the usual result is the immediate appearance of several town guards who either throw you in jail or attack on sight. Typically, nothing else comes of theft or attempted theft, and often, when you leave town and return later, the guards have "forgotten" what you did last time.

I mention this in particular because stealing is usually the only way in a CRPG the player can be something other than "good" (Exception: the *Ultima* series, where you can also slaughter innocent people). Which is not to say that everyone wants to be "evil," but there are those who prefer to be somewhere in-between, and most of the time, there is no way to express this in the game.

Combat, as such, has little to do with role-playing, except, perhaps, in those cases where you are given an options menu before hostilities actually begin. Generally such options give you a choice among running, fighting, talking, and bribing. In the majority of CRPGs, however, the only choice it between running or fighting. There is no opportunity for peaceful (relatively speaking) interaction.

All of this sounds rather dreary. You can't really converse with anyone, you often can't act the way you want (or envision your character as wanting to act), and most of the time, you end up fighting when you'd prefer not to. Throw in the typical banal plot ("You must stop Foozle the Evil Wizard before he manages to destroy/subjugate the world!"), and CRPGs appear to be in a very sorry state indeed.

Well, it isn't quite so bad as all that. While the ideal of true role-playing may not be attainable, there is still plenty of room for improvement, still many ways that a decent semblance, at least, can be added to these games.

One idea that is gaining popularity among designers is autonomous combat by NPC party members. Essentially, your character (the lead PC) is controlled by you; everyone else fights in a pre-programmed way. *Ultima VI* has this. You can pre-set

(Continued on page 70)

Circle Reader Service #61

Wanna Bet? (Where The Silicon Meets The Sands)

An Annotated Paiktography ("Game"ography)

by Alan Emrich

Anyone who has ever placed a bet on the old gaming table has probably taken at least a passing interest in computer gambling games. With the myriad of titles beckoning like the glittering casinos of the Las Vegas Strip itself, it is important to get a cursory insight into the various games of chance offered for your home computer. The reader should be aware that all of the "intangibles" which makes a person prefer one casino over another are just as applicable when choosing one computer gambling game over another. Therefore, the following survey should be understood as purely the author's opinion. Those who do not care for the author's conclusions are welcome to challenge him at any of the various poker tables in Las Vegas on any prearranged weekend.

Casino gambling games are like clothes; they come in many different sizes, shapes and colors (and they don't always fit!). Seeing a boxed game on the shelf does not make it in itself any better than the one which is not so widely distributed and packaged in a plastic bag. The proof is in the playing. Here, then, is a brief look at the gambling games found our *Computer Gaming World* library.

That's The Fact, Blackjack

BlackJack Strategy (IBM, $15.00) by **J. P. Enterprises**. This informative program underscores the quality potential of public-domain software. Features include up to 6 positions, 1-10 decks of cards, variable house rules, counting aids and more. Easily useable as a quality study in the game, one certainly receives more then his money's worth with this one.

Casino Blackjack Counter/Tutor (IBM) by **Manhattan Software**. Sort of a "Blackjack 101" course to help one learn his way around the table, this program offers less bells and whistles than many of the others, but is a *solid* introductory primer. The handy splitting, standing and doubling card is probably the most important information the beginner can hope to absorb with this product. Money management and point counting are de-emphasized.

Beating The House At Blackjack (Apple) by **Applications Plus, Inc.** While a bit difficult to wade through, the core education of blackjack point counting, when to stand, etc. are all here. This game stresses the basics, explaining the rationale and *theory* behind point counting. The game presentation and graphics are antiquated, but the value of the education never changes.

Edward O. Thorp's Real Blackjack (IBM) by **Villa Crespo Software, Inc.** While stating that this product is for beginners and intermediates, it is ahead of most of the competition in this category. Dr. Thorp *invented* the point count systems commonly used today and the software presents a rich, nearly mindboggling, plethora of game analysis. Strategy, card counting and money management are all given emphasis and players are graded on their performances. Plus, players have the capacity of setting the game parameters so that they are aligned accurately with the rules at their favorite casino.

Yakety, Yak! Let's Talk Craps!

Casino Craps (IBM) by **Manhattan Software**. This software package is like a bowl of mush. Everything in it may be nutritious, but the taste is bland with no graphic spice whatsoever to recommend it. One can learn the gist of the game from the dot-matrix-printed rules booklet and watch the program alter the hard-to-read faces on the dice while the money flows in and out of one's bank account, but the game is about as much fun as waiting in a doctor's office.

Profe$$or Crap$ (IBM) by **Scorpio Systems International, Inc.** As the name implies, this is a detailed, tutorial program for the serious student of the dice. Black and white graphics depict a craps table, animated dice roll around the table and bets are called as they are paid and collected by the house. The 50+-page rules booklet is easy to digest and very enlightening about the play of craps. Highly recommended.

Vegas Craps (Atari ST) by **California Dreams**. By far the best-looking product of this type with the easiest to use interface, this craps game is a real pleasure. Basic strategies for betting and taking odds are presented, but the graphics make this particular craps game absolutely *compelling* to play. It is a delightful way to test out one's systems before the casino crowds come crashing and rattle both wits and chips. Only multi-player competition could make this a stronger product.

Captain Video Poker

Vegas Video Poker (Apple) by **Applications Plus, Inc.** Clean and simple, the clumsy interface for this game is more than offset by the clear-headed approach to educating the player. The documentation explains the winning percentages like a friend might, with a brief explanation of why one must do certain things to up the winning percentages. It is this insightful documentation which makes the game, not the computer program itself.

Mike Caro's Video Poker (Apple) by **Arisoft**. While this game does offer the unique function of "head to head" video poker with a friend at the same computer ("poker flurry"), the jackpot video poker feature is the "same old, same old . . .". No lessons are taught in the documentation, and with the green clubs, purple hearts, blue spades and orange diamonds, the game greatly resembles a bowl of *Lucky Charms* breakfast cereal.

Arcade Poker (IBM) by **Cheapware**. While reasonably entertaining, this game gives the player all the thrills of a "bar game" style of video poker (with all its inherent limitations and lack of interaction). No lessons or insights are provided, just some tunes and cards while the player competes for "points" rather than simulated bucks. The object is to get the best high score on the scoreboard.

Poker Chips And Dips

Poker Night (Apple) by **Gerhardt Software**. This game recreates the type of action that one could find in a game of basement poker. The player sets the "house rules" for betting limits, check and raise, etc. and

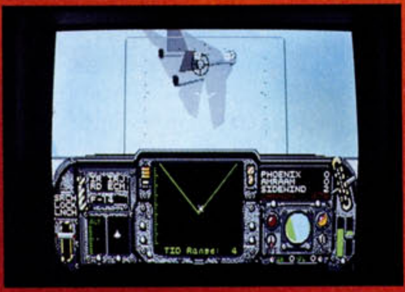
(Continued on page 54)



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CHASING DEMONS . . . AND MIGS

(Continued from page 40)

Flight aficionados may notice a realistic implementation of the wing-over maneuver during the bomb-run approach. This has, previously, been very difficult to program due to the large amount of computational power required.

Joystick response is accurate as it is easy to spend all of your time over-compensating if you are too heavy-handed. The avionics fits in both aircraft have been well-integrated. The Intruder's DIANE bombing/navigation system has been cleverly programmed to give the "highway" in the sky.

Landing on a moving carrier deck is handled very realistically. Not only must one utilize the correct angle of attack, but the carrier provides its own "meatball" guidance system which is visible from the player's cockpit. Landings count, with points awarded or deleted based on the quality of the landing. Landing can be completed using a handy rudder feature that enables a "slip approach," using a standard joystick. However, the best response for this area was found using the MAXX yoke and pedals. The Advanced Gravis stick was also found to enhance the illusion of flight.

This review was based upon the pre-release version 1.1. The reviewer tried the initial 1.0 version and found it to be bug-ridden (the game froze more than a few times, etc). No such occurrences were found in version 1.1. Enhanced features of version 1.1 include a redesigned joystick "feel," more sounds (via the PC speaker and AdLib sound board) and support for two joysticks (e.g: analog joystick or yoke and pedals). Also, one must only enter the program configuration once. It will be saved to disk and automatically loaded from then onwards.

Other enhancements which would be welcome in future versions would be: the option of re-starting a tour of duty from the menu rather than having to delete files from DOS; having the program default to mouse control during the menu selection process instead of the program retaining the slow joystick mode after one finishes a mission (in menu mode the joystick does "creep" somewhat, too); and an immediate response to show that Accelerated Mode has been selected (rather than the present 3-4 second time delay). Also, an option to toggle the moving map/radar when in "look-down-in-the-cockpit-view" on the F-4 would be welcome.

Performance Evaluation

Overall, *Flight of the Intruder* is a *tour de force* in simulation programming. The program shows that care and attention has been applied to the project. The 3D graphics have been well programmed, especially considering the amount of information on-screen at once. For the moment, at least, *Flight of the Intruder* is the king of the flight simulations by offering a more varied and comprehensive approach to combat flight. **CGW**

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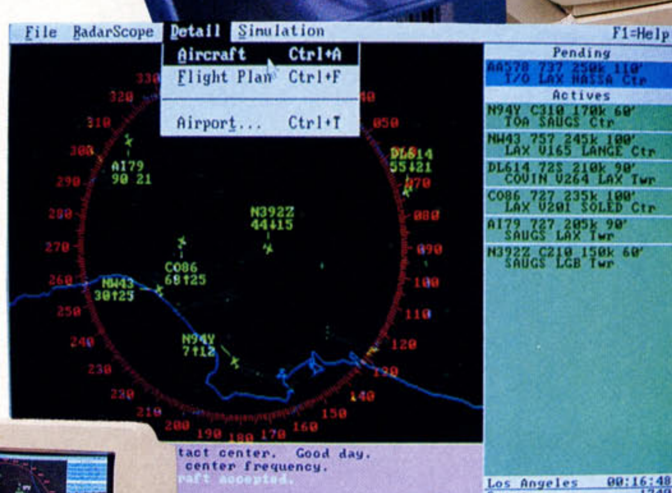
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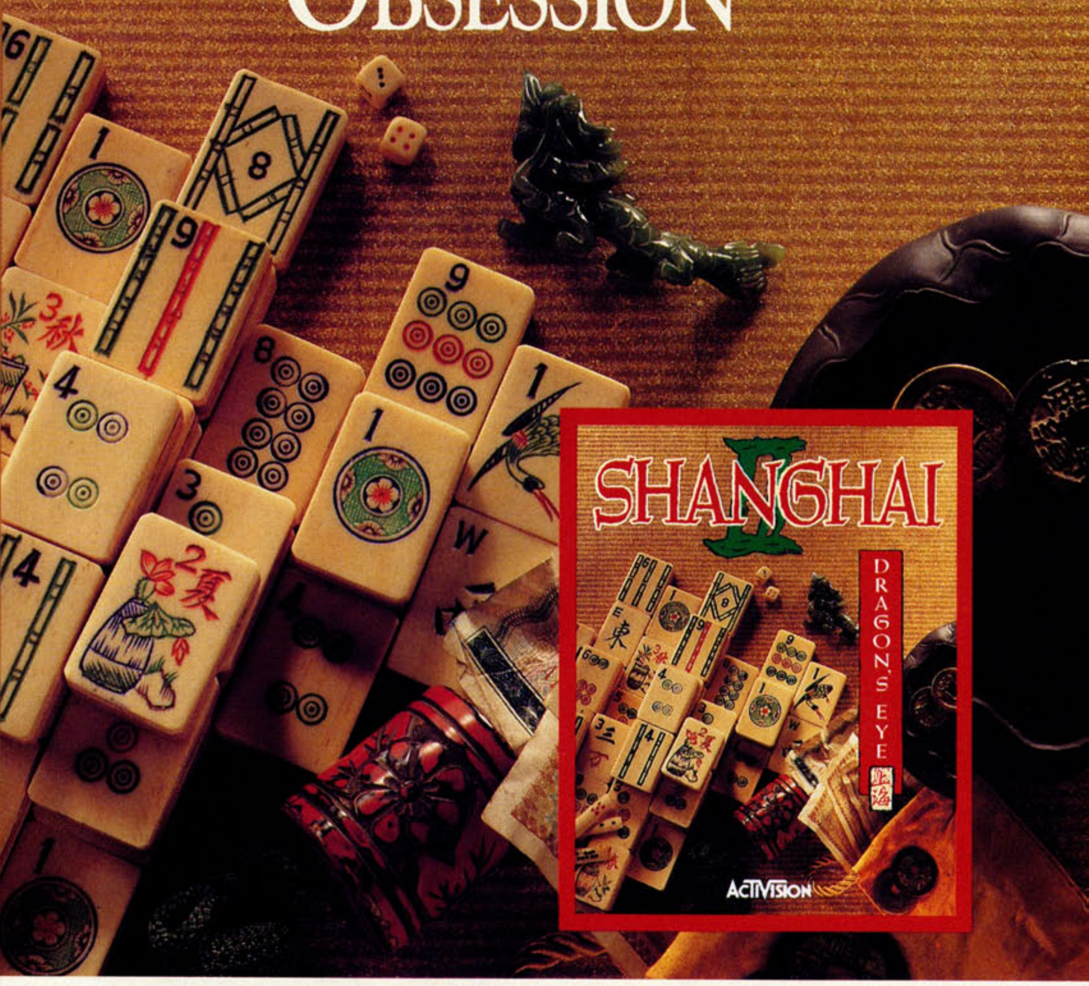
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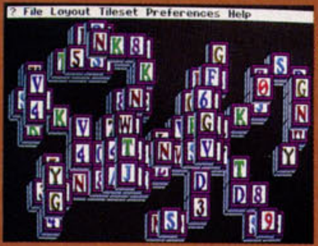
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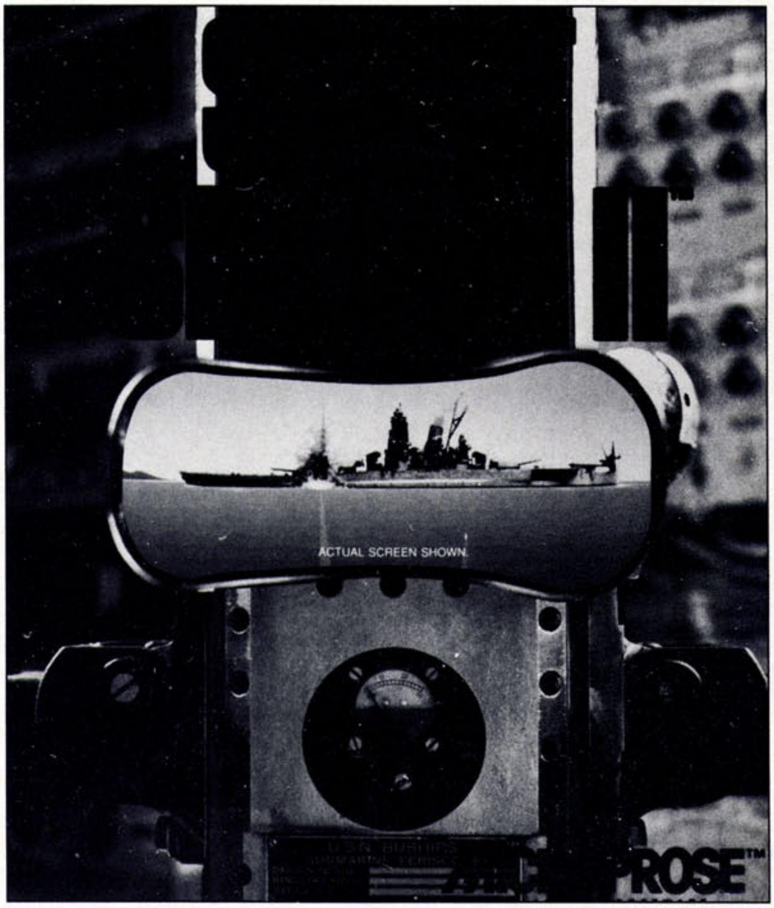
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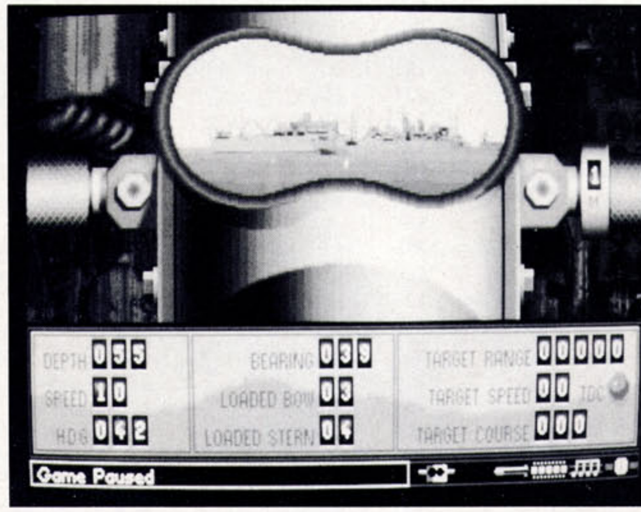
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"Down The Throat" and "Up The Kilt" with MicroProse's *Silent Service II*

by Dr. Johnny L. Wilson





TITLE:	Silent Service II
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNERS:	Arnold Hendrick, Roy Gibson and Sid Meier
PUBLISHER:	MicroProse Software Hunt Valley, MD

Submarine service offers an romantic image of elite submariners for good reason. Submarine warfare involves use of what the late Gordon W. Prange (in *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict Of History*) called the only ocean-going craft capable of operating efficiently " . . . even though its nation did not enjoy command of the sea. Its very nature and purpose called for it to foray into enemy waters." This shark-like quality of maneuvering beneath the sea and surfacing from the depths with implements of destruction offers a colorful canvas upon which would-be submarine commanders can paint their exploits of heroism.

Like no previous simulation, *Silent Service II* (*SS2*) allows the computer gamer to vicariously experience both the near-invincible feeling of successful missions and the stark terror of near-impotence when one is being hunted by enemy sonar and tormented by exploding depth charges. Not only are the graphics geometrically improved over the original *Silent Service* (both the EGA and VGA/MCGA graphics are outstanding with digitized ship photographs rather than blocky silhouettes), but the new game features digitized speech, amazing sound support on both the Ad Lib and Roland boards, eight scenarios based on classic battles (instead of the maximum seven in the previous game) and seven different submarine classes (with more than 100 actual ship names assigned them). Players can also command for a single patrol (longer scenarios) or a full war career (campaign games, complete with promotions and decorations), as opposed to the five specific patrol missions utilized in the earlier game. The complete selection of submarine classes not only enables players to try their luck with inferior equipment (especially the Old-S Class submarines that were not present in the earlier games), but also means a book like Richard Sheffield's *40 Great Submarine Simulator War Adventures* (**Compute! Books**, $14.95) becomes more valuable in that one can select ships with the exact characteristics of the historical ships in order to successfully re-enact the forty patrols from World War II depicted in that book.

"Pinging" (Harsh Sounds of Criticism)

MicroProse Labs is to be commended for integrating the seven submarines classes into the game in such a way that each submarine functions with the performance characteristics of its historical counterparts. It is a fascinating educational experience to command an Old-S Class submarine on a war patrol and *not* have to remember to refrain from using the stern tubes. Previously, historical gamers had to use their self-discipline to impose the limitations of inferior vessels on their game play. In *SS2*, one doesn't have to remember, because there *are* no stern tubes in an Old-S submarine. Note, however, that *all* submarines in *SS2* have a TDC (Torpedo Data Computer), even though the "P" class was actually the first U.S. submarine class to possess the analog targeting system. This critic, however, accepts this as more of a "playing aid" than an anachronism.

(Continued on page 68)

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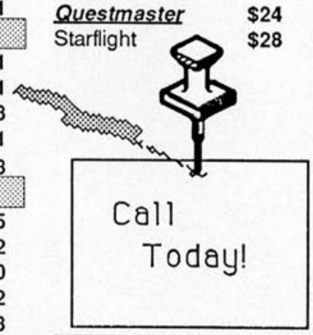
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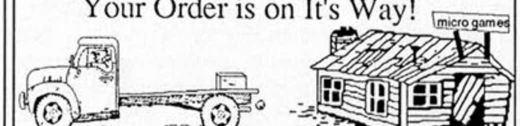


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Battle Chess	$33
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Omega	$33
Pirates	$33
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White Death	$40

Hot New Games

Jack Nicklaus' Unlimited Golf - IBM $41. Fabulous new golf game with VGA graphics and a powerful course designer module.

Silent Service II- IBM $41. Fabulous new submarine game with VGA graphics. Has a campaign option and instant replay of each mission.

Hint Books

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Heroes Quest	$8
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Neuromancer	$12
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Pool Radiance	$10
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688 Attack Sub	$10
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M-1 Tank Platoon	$41
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C-64	
Buck Rogers	$28
Dragon Strike	$28
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Magic Candle II	$34

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Anc Art of War Sea	$31
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Battle Chess	$31
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Dragon Wars	$34
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Gettysburg	$41
Jutland	$30
Kings Bounty	$28
Knights of Legend	$34
Magic Candle	$34
Manhunter NY	$34
MBT Cent Germany	$41
Midway	$30
Neuromancer	$34
North Atlantic	$30
Omega	$34
Panzer Battles	$28
Pirates	$31
Pool of Radiance	$31
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New titles are underlined.

VISA MASTERCARD

Wanna Bet?

(Continued from page 46)

then fills the table with players. Action is dealer's choice from among 20 different poker games, including six variations of 5-card draw, five of 7-card stud and many others. *Poker Night* is a quaint addition to one's library, but does not break any new ground.

Draw Poker (Apple) by **Softape.** This is an oldie. The two-player, head-to-head five-card draw poker game just doesn't have the glitz to be attractive, nor the tools to be educational. Discard and draw another game.

Amarillo Slim's Real Poker–5-Card Stud (IBM) by **Villa Crespo Software.** While this package strictly focuses on the one poker game, it gives it such an intense examination as to be the "master's" thesis on the game. Slim is always right there to coach players on improving their play by adapting his style. The interface of controlling everything by function keys is a bit clunky, but the statistics and advice provided during play at the 4-player table make this an enlightening software package.

Aussie Joker Poker (Apple) by **Joker Software.** This game of points and risk is a far derivative from the standard fare of poker. With no artificial intelligence, two or more human players square off to play a game



which, at best, can be described: "The variation *as* theme." Players may ask for continuous redeals of their poker hand until they bust, thus risking everything on every draw.

Friday Night Poker Club (IBM) by **Spectre Software.** With only two games to offer (5-card stud and draw) and four players at the table, the selection is a bit too limited. The other players can be computer-controlled, each with their own personality/skill at the game, and they each make distinctive quips as the game plays, but AI remarks just don't substitute for "action."

Vegas Johnny's Dealer's Choice (IBM) by **Top Score Software.** If there was an award for best all-around poker game, this would win it, hands down. About 20 parameters can be set (betting limits, check and raise, etc.) and, of the many games to choose from, each can be played high, low, high-low split and high-spade-in-the-hole. On-line advice and a table for eight players combines with numerous other aids and features to make this a game to be studied. No tutorials are provided, but this is the game where the sharks are separated from the minnows!

Championship Poker (IBM) by **Applications Plus, Inc.** Texas Hold 'Em fanatics won't want to miss this software package. While there is nothing graphically remarkable about the game, the manual is almost zen-like in its analytical approach to this game of poker. The big boys play for big bucks in Vegas playing hold 'em, and this would be the

(Continued on page 62)

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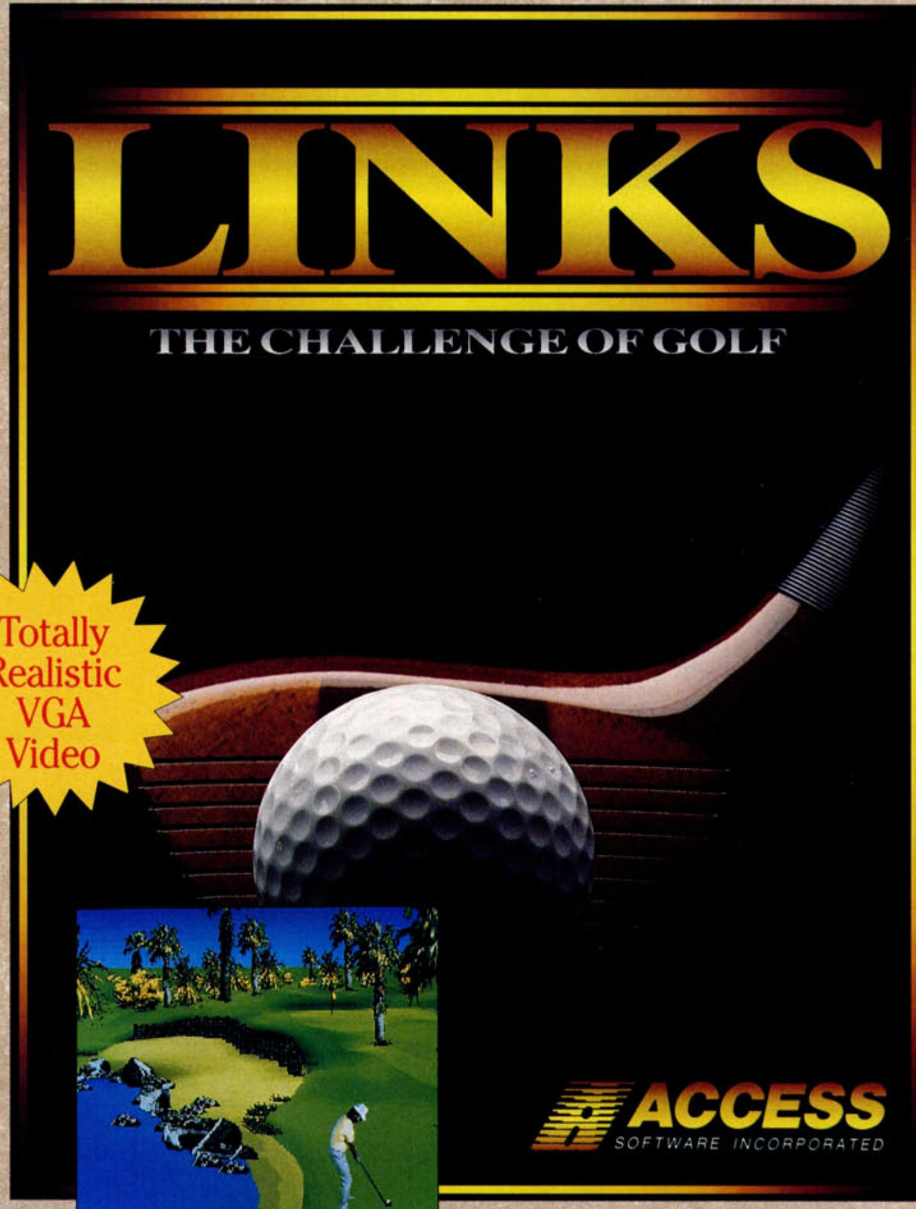
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The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Machine(s)	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*MicProse*	*I*	*ST*	*72*	*10.46*
2.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*Am,I,ST*	*AC,SI*	*93*	*10.39*
3.	*Ultima VI*	*Origin*	*I*	*RP*	*74*	*9.99*
4.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*Many*	*ST,SI*	*125*	*9.68*
5.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*I*	*WG*	*70*	*9.64*
	M-1 Tank Platoon	*MicProse*	*I*	*SI,WG*	*68*	*9.64*
7.	*Populous*	*EA*	*Am,I,ST*	*ST*	*116*	*9.23*
8.	*MechWarrior*	*Activision*	*I*	*SI,RP*	*51*	*9.22*
9.	*Hero's Quest*	*Sierra*	*Am,I,ST*	*AD,RP*	*54*	*9.12*
10.	*Battlehawks 1942*	*LucasFilm*	*Am,I,ST*	*AC,SI*	*86*	*9.11*

No.	Name	Source	Machine(s)	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	Red Storm Rising	MicProse	C,I,ST	SI	74	9.10
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	Am,I	WG,ST	44	9.10
13.	Secret of Slvr Blades	SSI	C64,I	RP	43	9.09
14.	Bard's Tale III	EA	Ap,C	RP	74	9.03
	Ultima V	Origin	Ap,I	RP	102	9.03
16.	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	Am	AC,ST	53	9.01
	Wasteland	EA	Ap,C,I	RP	119	9.01
18.	Space Quest III	Sierra	Am,I,ST	AD	34	8.97
19.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	31	8.96
	Starflight 2	EA	I	RP	62	8.69
21.	Nuclear War	New World	Am,I	ST	39	8.94
22.	Indy: Adventure	LucasFilm	Am,I	AD	23	8.93
	Overrun	SSI	Ap,C	WG	24	8.93
24.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	Ap,C,I	RP	29	8.97
25.	Falcon	SpcHolo	Many	SI	62	8.90
26.	Bandit Kings	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	26	8.87
	NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	ST	86	8.87
28.	Indianapolis 500	EA	I	SI	29	8.86
29.	Second Front	SSI	I	WG	37	8.84
30.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	Ap,C,I	RP	54	8.81
31.	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	I	AC	25	8.80
	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	Ap,C,I	RP	43	8.80
33.	Project Stealth Ftr	MicProse	C	SI	29	8.79
34.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	30	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	Am,I,ST	RP	48	8.77
	Future Wars	Interplay	Am,I	AD	25	8.77
	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	Am,I	AD	47	8.77
38.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	C,I,ST	AC	74	8.76
39.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	Many	AD	58	8.75
40.	Action Stations	CnflctAnlytic	I	WG	22	8.71
	Breach 2	Omnitrend	Am,I,ST	ST,RP	29	8.71
42.	Neuromancer	Interplay	Many	AD	33	8.70
43.	F-15 Strk Eagle 2	MicProse	I	SI	58	8.69
44.	Battlechess	Interplay	Many	ST	58	8.68
45.	Curse of Azure Bonds	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	70	8.67
	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	Ap,C	WG	43	8.67
47.	Ballistyx	Psygns	Am,ST,I	AC	20	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Toolworks	Many	ST	44	8.65
	Police Quest II	Sierra	I,GS,ST	AD	43	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	Am,I,ST	AC	31	8.65
51.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	Am,I	AC,ST	38	8.64
52.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	116	8.61
53.	Champs of Krynn	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	65	8.60
54.	Sword of Samurai	MicProse	I	ST,RP	43	8.55
55.	Genghis Khan	Koei	I	ST,RP	34	8.54

THE HALL OF FAME

The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Source	Machine(s)	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
	It Came From Desert	Cnmware	Am,ST	AD	36	8.54
57.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	I	SI	40	8.53
58.	Carrier Command	MicroPlay	Am,I,ST	AC,WG	49	8.51
	DeathTrack	Activision	I	AC	29	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	WG	68	8.51
61.	Silent Service	MicProse	Many	SI	257	8.50
62.	Hostage	Mindscape	Am,I,ST	AC	28	8.47
63.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	Am,I,M,ST	AD	31	8.42
64.	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	50	8.39
65.	Arkanoid	Dsc/Taito	Many	AC	69	8.38
	Wings of Fury	Brodbnd	Ap	AC	52	8.38
67.	Strike Fleet	EA	Ap,C,I	WG	79	8.37
68.	Fire Brigade	Panther	Many	WG	30	8.34
69.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	Am,ST	AC,AD	75	8.32
70.	Modem Wars	EA	C,I	ST	24	8.29
	TV Sports Basketball	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	33	8.29
72.	688 Attack Sub	EA	Am,I	SI,ST	59	8.27
	Drakkhen	Data East	Am	RP	32	8.27
74.	Manhunter	Sierra	Many	AD	72	8.25
75.	Centurion	EA	I	ST	49	8.24
76.	Police Quest	Sierra	Many	AD	98	8.23
77.	Starglider II	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC	65	8.22
78.	Jack Nicklaus' Golf	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C,GS	AC	68	8.21
80.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	Many	AD	52	8.20
81.	Loom	LucasFilm	I	AD	38	8.18
82.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	I	AC,SI	31	8.16
83.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	Am,I	AD	28	8.14
84.	Tetris	SpcHolo	Many	AC,ST	46	8.13
85.	Conquests of Camelot	Sierra	Am,I	AD	33	8.12
	Vette!	SpcHolo	I	AC	26	8.12
87.	Stealth Mission	Sublogic	C	SI	36	8.11
88.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	I	ST,RP	48	8.09
	Shiloh	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	54	8.09
90.	Knights of Legend	Origin	Ap,C,I	RP	26	8.08
91.	Speedball	Cnmware	Many	AC	35	8.06
92.	Russia	SSG	Ap,C	WG	61	8.05
93.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	I,C	RP	71	8.04
94.	Test Drive II	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC	42	8.02
95.	WC Leader Board	Access	Many	AC,ST	97	8.00
96.	Breach	Omnitrnd	Many	ST,RP	114	7.98
97.	Jordan vs Bird	EA	Many	AC	47	7.96
98.	Codename: Iceman	Sierra	Am,I	AD	32	7.92
	Prophecy	Activision	I	AC,AD	32	7.92
100.	Ghostbusters II	Activision	C,I	AC	29	7.91

Top Strategy



Top Action



Top Adventure



Top Wargame



Blasting VUXs

(Continued from page 27)

ties. *Solution*: shoot backwards. In the Full Game, Mycons are especially useful for cleaning-up lone, vulnerable ships, because Mycons regenerate full crew between turns.

The **Spathi Discriminator** is most dangerous when running from the enemy, from which position it can launch BUTT (Backward Utilized Tracking Torpedo) missiles directly into its enemy's path. Thus, it behooves the Spathi commander to entice his opponent into chasing him. Taunts and jeers being one of the Spathi commander's most important tools, the design of a Spathi ship rewards an experienced commander (that is to say, one who knows which way is the front). The otherwise ineffective "main weapon" can become quite deadly with practice. If you need to kill only a few more crew for victory, as when fighting an undamaged Arilou, don't shoot your wad in a single facing. Instead, rotate as you fire to increase your chance of a lucky hit.

The **Androsynth Guardian** does the most damage when hitting an enemy in Blazer form, especially if it gets a lucky "critical" strike, inflicting several rapid successive blows. To achieve maximum damage, strike the enemy from the direction of least relative velocity (usually from behind), so as to minimize the scattering effect. The more fuel you have when you transform, the longer you stay in Blazer form, but if you are very close to your enemy, transform whenever possible. Such sporadic, lurching advances are disconcerting to the enemy (hopefully screwing up his aim) and let you travel faster than your normal maximum velocity.

The Androsynth's molecular acid bubbles are useful both as a defensive shield (the Androsynth ship cannot be hurt by its own bubbles), and as an offensive weapon, provided they are deployed *en masse* in the path of a nearby enemy vessel.

The **VUX Intruder** has the advantage of always appearing nearby an enemy vessel *when combat begins*. The VUX commander must be ready to fire instantly, and make course adjustments to keep his laser on target. If the enemy escapes and possesses any long or intermediate range weapons, the VUX must immediately seek out the planet and engage in a Gravity Whip. Once at a comfortable cruising speed, the VUX can recharge its huge batteries, and launch the occasional limpet. If the enemy launches a seeking weapon, don't forget to shoot at it as it approaches. When the VUX nears its target, it should slow by rotating to face the enemy and thrusting. Never engage your enemy unless you have lots of fuel!

To make effective use of your limpets, deploy them in a curtain, then turn and thrust ahead of where your enemy must flee to avoid them. Once a few limpets have affixed themselves to enemy ship, pour 'em on! When the enemy is really gunked-up, and you are fully recharged, go for the kill. Remember, though the Yehat's shield is proof against your laser, your limpets pass through its defenses unaffected. There is nothing more rewarding than zapping an ever-so-invulnerable Yehat ship which is floating dead in space covered in green slime.

(Continued on page 76)

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

California Dreams' Street Rod

By David M. Wilson

TITLE:	Street Rod
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, C64/128, IBM
PRICE:	$34.95
DESIGNER:	PZK Development
PUBLISHER:	California Dreams San Jose, CA

Remember in grade school the annual fall ritual of writing a composition based one's summer exploits? **California Dreams** has produced a game package called *Street Rod* that just might offer something to write about (of course, no one guarantees an "A" on that assignment!).

The player begins in the summer of 1963 with a modest bankroll and proceeds the rigorous climb up the social ladder towards becoming "The King" of the street racing scene before school opens.



Getting Rolling

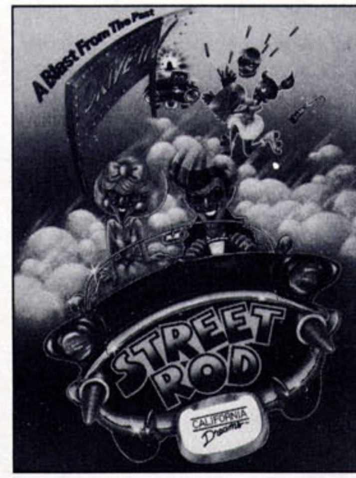
To begin, one carefully selects a rod within "his" (how many girls raced street machines before Janet Guthrie came on the scene?) means by checking out the used car section of the on-screen newspaper (is this getting nostalgic yet?). Naturally, the player's first car will have to be a low-end model (just short of a "clunker"). Immediately, one has the option to take his car to the garage and tune it up. Just pop the hood and adjust the timing in an attempt to get the greatest possible performance. (*Note:* The instructions in the manual regarding tuning an engine seem misleading. We found lining the timing mark up properly more effective than retarding the engine).

On the IBM version, the EGA graphics are executed well enough to readily recognize all of the many different types of vehicles. The C-64 version is clean and clear, as well, but the Amiga version offers nice artistic touches on every screen. On the IBM and C-64, the door panel stickers on some of the cars are difficult to read (but so what?). The roads themselves and various places of interest in the game are real enough to keep it interesting and road racers will have no problem with the scrolling and scenery graphics as the arrows indicate the direction of any upcoming curves, as well as any threatening collision with an unyielding telephone pole.

The documentation is decorated with slick glossy pictures of antique cars in a fancy nostalgic restaurant. It is as beautiful to look at as it is well written. The exception is that the information regarding tuning the engine is incorrect, but it is corrected on the game's reference card. While the reference card is thorough enough to allow players to play a while, success will warrant reading the manual before play!

After tuning up one's "heap," the player can cruise into town for gas or check out the local action at the teen's social mecca, Bob's Drive-In. Filling up with gas is important as a competitor will only mock a challenger who has insufficient gas to run a race. New players will not use "self-service" at the pumps because that keeps their social status down (very uncool in '63). It is always best to sit in the car and let the lethargic attendant pump the gas.

At the Drive-in, players have opportunity to challenge their opposition. A cagey racer will begin with a few simple drag races run "just for kicks," rather than for wagers. Even the low-end cars can win a race if they get the right jump and then stay in front of their rival (often through "cheating" by cutting them off). After winning a few races, the player can begin wagering with some confidence. A lot of the guys at Bob's Drive-In refuse to compete in betting events unless they are raced for "kicks" first.



Car Tunes

As soon as the player has won enough funds, he may cruise back to the garage and browse through the paper for car parts. To win road (as opposed to drag) races, cars need to be modified. Wise players will quickly buy the largest engine available, as well as a racing manifold, dual racing carburetors, a racing transmission, and racing slicks. It is difficult to win the longer road races without this specialized equipment (which costs plenty).

Once the player is confident that his car is "the ultimate," he can begin running road races for money, kicks, or pink slips (ownership papers). If he wins a car, he should consider "souping it up" and racing it, too. Although the Corvettes seem to be the fastest cars, the old Chevys and Oldsmobiles were easier to handle during the curve filled road races. Players may want to keep this in mind.

"Save the game," veteran users often cry. They would be especially right when playing *Street Rod*. Saving the game before road racing for pink slips is a *must*. After all, who wants to work all summer building up a incomparable race car, just to lose it because some "punk" ran them off the road and into a nearby telephone pole, totaling their pride and joy?

When the player has a nice stable of cars assembled in his garage and he believes he is ready to face "The King," they should sell a couple of cars, buy a brand new Corvette, and head for the Drive-In. Apparently, the *Street Rod*'s designers have a GM preference as this reviewer couldn't beat The King with anything but a souped up Stingray.

End Of The Line

He that perseveres through to the end and triumphs will win not only the Road race, but also the king's prize "Vette" and Becky Sue, a prize babe. The designers of *Street Rod* have a lot to be proud of. They have produced a game which is a reliable simulation of (somewhat stereotypical) early '60's life (be sure to read the newspaper headlines in the game). It probably deserves a PG rating, however, as some mild expletives and visuals of teenagers smoking in order to look tough (correct for the period, but a negative symbol today) indicate that the game is for a more mature audience. The social commentary delivered when the player clicks on the beer bottle Icon, however, is most welcome.

Street Rod is a fine nod to nostalgia with a wholesome mixture of arcade action and strategy. By allowing the player the opportunity to choose, paint, decorate, modify and equip his own vehicle, there is even a real sense of driver/owner "pride" given to the player. Lovingly created, this game can be recommended for lovers of this era of Americana.

CGW

Letters from Paradise

Defender Attacker	Army	Ftr	Tran	Sub	Dest	Crui	Carr	Bshp
Army	50.0	50.0	24.4	*	12.5	0.4	0.4	0.0
Fighter	50.0	50.0	24.4	39.1	12.5	0.4	0.4	0.0
Transport	*	75.6	50.0	25.0	27.5	0.2	0.8	0.0
Submarine	*	75.0	85.9	62.5	75.0	12.5	31.3	6.3
Destroyer	*	87.5	72.5	39.1	50.0	1.9	5.5	0.0
Cruiser	99.9	99.6	99.8	94.7	98.1	50.0	88.7	14.5
Carrier	*	97.7	94.5	68.8	78.9	1.9	15.8	0.0
Battleship	100.0	99.9	100.0	98.0	99.9	85.6	99.4	50.0

Note: This table is true *only* for combat efficiency levels of 50%.

Imperial Correction

It was nice to see another article about my game *Empire* in the October issue of *CGW*. I found the discussion and analysis quite interesting. However, I am afraid that I must disagree with the probabilities indicated by Mr. Kenney. I find them to be somewhat in error.

The table presented below was created by Kelly McCauley, after consulting with me, and I believe it to be a more accurate representation.

Players should also recognize that, except for some special rules listed in the documentation, the attackers does *not* have any advantage.

Mark Baldwin
Littleton, CO

The article on Empire *strategy was based, of course, on calculations from a player's perspective and the writer indicated his procedure in creating his tables. We were, and still are, impressed by his methodology. Naturally, we also welcome this new and altered perspective from a designer's perspective. It all goes to show that* Empire *is still a viable (and stimulating) product.*

Industrial Waste

As usual, the September issue of *CGW* was both inspiring and frustrating. I read *CGW* from cover to cover each month for information about new games, the gaming industry, and the gaming craft, but one must do a lot of reading between the lines to find any hard facts.

As a reader, a game player (novice), and aspiring game creator (raw beginner), I would like to see articles that give some hard data regarding the computer game industry. For example; industry statistics, a perspective on trends in game design, perhaps a summary of landmark games and the lessons learned from them, a little piece of prognostication about where computer gaming is headed.

With regard to the CGD Conference, is there no publication of the proceedings or papers presented? I, and I'm sure many of your other readers, cannot attend such gatherings, but would dearly love to read the papers. One item that interests me very much is a paper reported to have been presented by Brenda Laurel.

I would like to see an opportunity for game players to respond to some of the ideology being spouted by a variety of people in and out of the gaming industry. Does anyone care what the player thinks, or is voting with our wallet our only input? One item from the CGD Conference comes to mind. Alluquere Rosanne Stone is reported to have taken the industry to task for reducing females to "'adolescent boys' with a fuller figure". As a male game player, who happens to like combat games, I have to say that females do not have the attributes which help my party survive all that well in combat. If the game designer made them as strong as men and gave them comparable hit points, endurance, strength, etc., then they would be as handy as men in a party. Unfortunately, they would no longer be true to our real-world experience of them. It is popular to stand up for your sex or to denigrate the blood-and-guts part of game playing as so much "macho" fantasy, but I have the impression that most game players are men from adolescence through maturity. If asked why I like the games I like, I would have to say I like the fantasy, the challenge, the vicarious danger, and the satisfaction of whipping the bad guys; yes, and the blood and guts, too, that's why I play. MUST I BE MADE TO FEEL GUILTY in service to someone else's need for perceived equality? MUST I PRETEND that women are men or that men are women?

Many thanks for a great mag,

Leonard Micko
Sunnyvale, CA

As a regular reader of CGW, *you should know that: a) we address the issues you raise in editorials, CES reports, industry news and special features like the* Journal of Computer Game Design *abstracts and conference coverage. Both tapes and proceedings of the conference are available to subscribers of the journal (see* CGW *#70, p.42, for details). Our answer to anti-violence sentiment was captured in* CGW *#71, p. 8. As for charges of sexism, it seems your letter confirms Ms. Stone's point. The industry directs its characterizations of women as the weaker sex because the games are primarily* combat-oriented. *Surely, there is room in the industry for games in which the strengths of women (nurturing, relationships, intelligence, problem-solving, etc.) provide the impetus for the challenge. Maybe not for people of your tastes, but in the process of broadening the appeal of computer games.*

Taking a Peek

(Continued from page 6)

tial strategy game is an interesting diversion, but its mutated price tag may make it unfit for survival in the marketplace. Players move their Dr. Darwin icon around the screen, pushing like creatures into one another to form higher lifeforms and move up the evolutionary chain. It's a party in the primordial soup! Mac ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Lawrence Productions, Inc.
1800 South 35th Street
Galesburg, MS 49053-9687

KATIE'S FARM: The sequel to "McGee," "Katie's Farm" takes McGee to visit his cousin Katie out in the country. This lapware for your tyke (ages 2-6) features no text and a mouse interface, so that your child can operate the computer all by him- or herself. The sound and graphics will keep your youngster entertained again and again (like their favorite videos do now). Apple IIGS ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Postcraft International, Inc.
27811 Avenue Hopkins, #6
Valencia, CA 91355

CITADEL: ADVENTURE OF THE CRYSTAL KEEP: This is your basic fantasy role-playing adventure done right for the Macintosh. The player manages a party of six through the single dungeon, but the character generation system, the rune-based magical system and intriguing combat system combine with a solid maze/quest to make this one worth a serious look. The combat system is particularly interesting, as players and characters maneuver around in a "room" in a slow, "real time" environment which the players can manage. Character generation from birth up is also intriguing. Mac ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

UBI Soft
c/o Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA

SKATE WARS: Strap on your spike-studded joystick glove and get ready for yet another bizarre futuristic arena com-ball game. Rollerball meets soccer meets ice hockey on a rink littered with ramps, jumps, and other nasties. This product comes into a crowded market of like games, and frankly, will take a beating from the competition. Circle Reader Service #7.

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Circle Reader Service #82

Wanna Bet?

(Continued from page 54)

right game to practice on before challenging them.

Everything Under The Lights: Casino Variety Games

Card Sharks (Commodore 64/128) by **Accolade.** This game includes poker (5-card draw, 7-card stud and hold 'em), blackjack and hearts. Computer opponents, which include Gorbachev, Thatcher and Reagan, move their mouths while cartoon balloons toss out banter. While this quickly loses its appeal, the games are solid, but not insightful, and the play is slow at best.

Championship Gambler (Apple/Commodore 64) by **Load 'N' Go! Software.** Three games are presented for each machine (on either side of the disk); 5-card draw poker (head-to-head against the "dealer"), blackjack and one-armed bandit. None of these games even begins to compare favorably with any of the aforementioned newer computer titles on specific gambling games. With three strikes, this game would be out if it were not also the absolutely least expensive (dare we say "cheapest?") of the lot.

Casino (Apple) by **Datamost.** Five games are offered on this disk, including: video poker, blackjack, roulette, keno and baccarat. This game is another old standby which time has weighed heavily upon. While the variety is there, none of the games really stands out as compelling enough to merit more than a few minute's play.

The Ultimate Casino Gambling Simulation (IBM) by **Capstone.** Don't let the title fool you; this game tries to cover a wide canvas with a wide brush, but ends up doing quite a bit of fingerpainting instead. The six games include blackjack, craps, keno, video poker, roulette, and an assortment of slot machines. Each pits the player against the house; thus there is little table "action" going on. The mouse interface is nice, but often the function keys are easier to use. "Ultimate," perhaps in scope, each of the various game selections is just more of the same (done better, usually, in programs dedicated to just the one game) and may owe its title more to the Trump Castle license than to its approach.

Vegas Casino 2 (IBM, Commodore 64) by **Mastertronic.** Two games are offered in this package; roulette and craps. While the graphics are there and quite attractive, the documentation could easily fit on a matchbook cover (it looks like the rules were printed on scratch paper or printed as one of those ubiquitous "Guides to Casino Games" given out free by the downtown Las Vegas hotels). This game succeeds as a quick diversion, but will only hold one's interest for so long before losing its challenge. Players had better know the rules of the games going in on this one.

Vegas Gambler (Atari ST) by **California Dreams.** This quadrigame features slots, blackjack, video poker and roulette. Each is done with the kinds of graphics and sounds the Atari ST and Amiga are known for, which enhances the replay value of the game a great deal. The simulation value is there also, along with a bit of education and strategy in the documentation. Overall, this is a well-balanced casino game product.

Fat Cat Casino (IBM) by **Gopher Broke Software.** In this casino package are four games: video poker, keno, blackjack and craps. The first two are average with EGA graphics and are true to their genre. The latter two, however, are more classroom-like, offering the player a real education and some insight into blackjack and craps. To this end, Gopher Broke has even published and included in the game two booklets, *CRAPS (How to Play! How to Win!)* and *Winning Blackjack*. While not as pretty at *Vegas Gambler*, there is more to learn in this package. **CGW**



THE BEST OF THE FUTURE

Journey to the far future, to a time when Earth is uninhabitable, and you must find a new home for Mankind. The company that revolutionized combat flight simulation has taken another bold step with *Lightspeed*.

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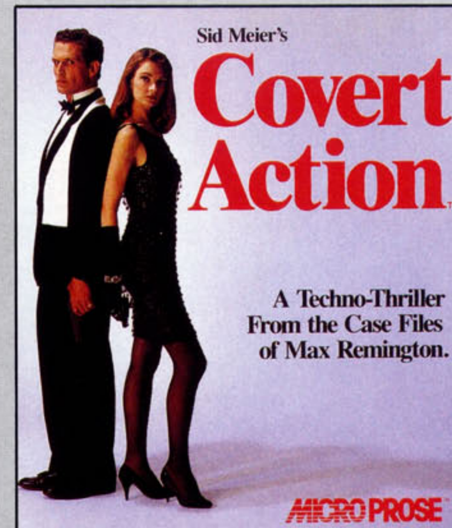
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The first space game to combine sophisticated role-playing with state-of-the-art technology, *Lightspeed* is the future made available today. As always, MicroProse presents the Best of Times.





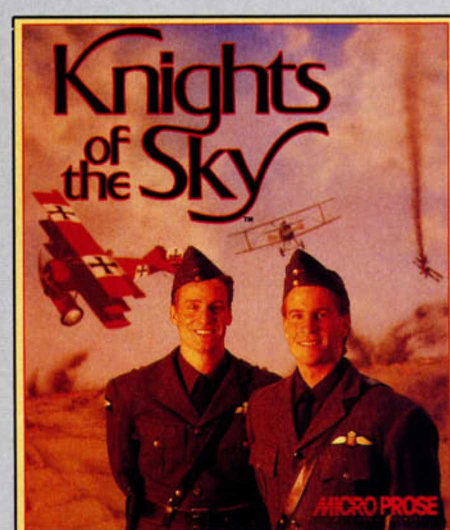




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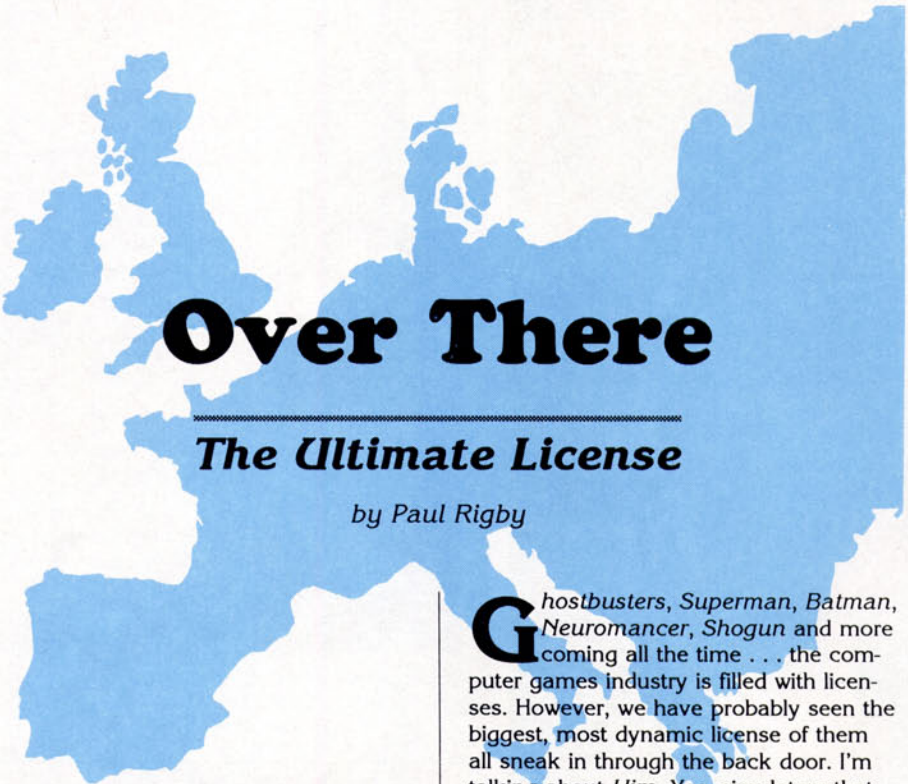
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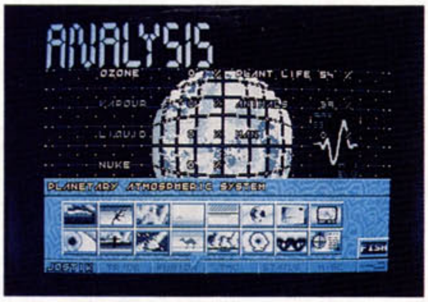


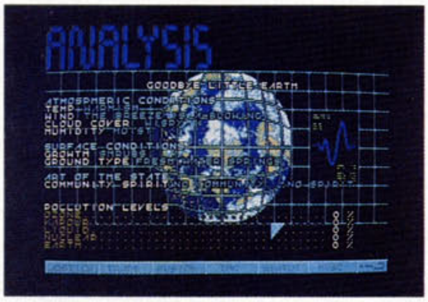
Over There

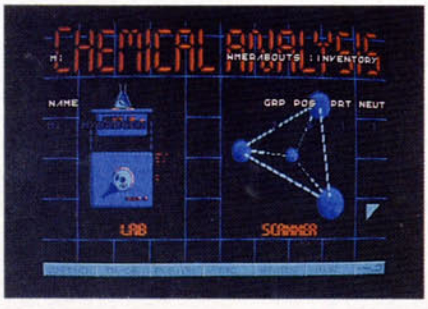
The Ultimate License

by Paul Rigby

Ghostbusters, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Neuromancer*, *Shogun* and more coming all the time . . . the computer games industry is filled with licenses. However, we have probably seen the biggest, most dynamic license of them all sneak in through the back door. I'm talking about *Him*. Yes, simulators that place the player in the role of Benevolent Creator have become the talk of the industry. In fact, *Sim City*, *Sim Earth*, *Populous*, and *Balance of the Planet* are soon to be joined by *Debut* from UK software house **Pandora**.







This particular planet simulation does not take place on Earth, although similarities exist. The aim of the game is to stabilize the planet's ecosystem and environment. The goal is to rid the world of pollution and create a planet suitable for habitation. The people living in the smoke-belching cities must be moved out onto the planetary surface to live in small, more manageable cities.

As "God," the player must manipulate specific chemicals (i.e. orbiton, arsenic, helium, etc.) to form chemical "recipes" that perform specific jobs such as affecting clouds, the ozone, liquid and vapor pollution and so on. All of the latter can be affected by Alpha, Beta and Gamma radiation which affect their relative strengths, as well as mutating or changing it into another chemical. The player's goal is to place man, animals and plants in areas where they are likely to form a successful food chain.

The second part of the game is an arcade sequence. This section takes place within the four cities that are spreading the pollution. One must infiltrate each city and rescue the good citizens. Money is also made in this area which can be used to buy more chemicals for the simulation area. *Debut* is available now for Amiga and ST.

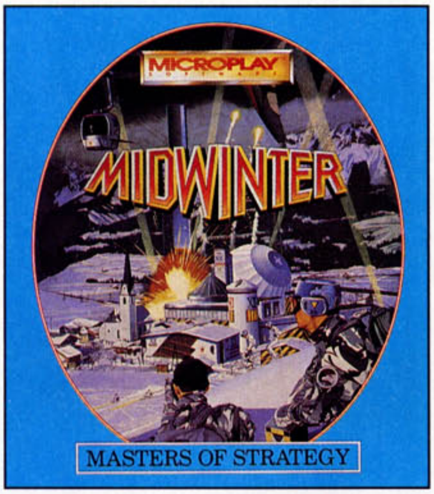
I have a book at home—well, a dossier, really. Created by Dennis Wheatley and Joe Links, it is called *Murder Off Miami*. It's packed with letters, photographs and "real" clues such as cigarette ends and a piece of blood-stained curtain—a complete murder case between two covers, in fact. One sifts through the info and after determining "whodunnit," an envelope found at the back of the dossier is opened and one can discover where they were right or wrong.

CRL, the UK software house, has taken another case in the series, *Herewith the Clues*, and turned it into a computer game. The case asks players to find out who killed Serge Orloff. Using a hypercard-type environment, information is accessed by mouse commands alone. The game is a graphic database of information interlinked in an intuitive manner. Thus, one simply reads a letter and clicks on a name in the letter and *voila*, the dossier and photo for that character will be loaded for the perusal of computer detectives. Digitized sound effects follow your actions. Produced for the Amiga and ST (maybe PC too), the only piece of game documentation that is needed is an introductory card to the game and a short letter from Commissioner Hodges, assigning the player to the case.

In a desperate attempt to secure a regular mention in this hallowed column, **Topologika** has produced yet another text-only PC adventure. Called *The Last Days of Doom*, it tidily completes the much vaunted Doom trilogy. For those who were brought up on hyper-difficult **Infocom** games and have spurned everything else since (because they were "too easy"), I'd advise you to check out the Doom trilogy. Written by Peter Kilworth, a theoretical research oceanographer, *Last Days* is packed with 218 rooms and an on-line help facility.

The story surrounds the dying planet Doomawangara. Of course, the player and his/her trusty robot must save it! You will discover the purpose of the artifacts and why volcanos can exist so close to glaciers; you will deal with squashed spaceships, slow beings, time travel and other really wild things. Complete with a free adventure, *Hezarin*, *The Last Days of Doom* can be purchased for 19.95 (inc P+P) from Topologika, PO Box 39, Stilton, Peterborough, PE7 3RL. Tel: 01144 733 244682 (Visa/Access accepted, 24 hours).

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What if you flew your hang-glider north, got lucky enough to catch the afternoon updraft, made it to town, rallied your troops, and attacked the invaders just as they reached the narrowest part of the valley below?

The world is locked in a new ice age. A powerful enemy has invaded your small village to overtake your heat mines, your only source of heat and power.

A collection of mismatched citizens is the only army to oppose the invaders.

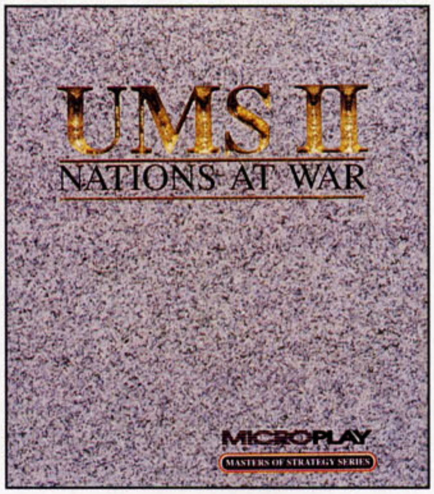
Innocent civilian equipment — skis, hang-gliders, snowmobiles and cable cars — suddenly become indispensable implements of war.

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And you can see it all from any of four levels of zoom and magnification, from a global view of the whole campaign, down to a battle zone only 8 miles on a side.

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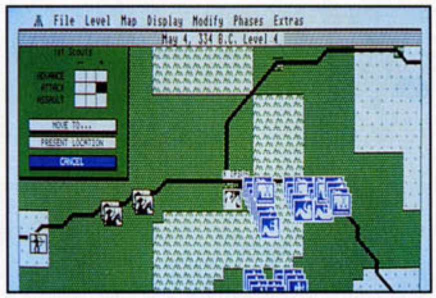
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From **Amazon Systems** comes a book which will be treasured by adventure authors and heartily enjoyed by adventure players everywhere. Called *Adventures—The Secret Art*, and written by Gil Williamson, it comprises 128 pages, divided up into eleven chapters with a number of appendices. Included within the book are chapters discussing how a designer should determine how a game is to be presented (text or graphics?), how to obtain game ideas (plot elements, puzzles, weapons, apparel, mazes and so on), discusses the style of images, text and sound, and compares various game systems. In addition, a later chapter talks about publishing a game and features a section on copy protection (without the expense), self-publishing, going to an outside publisher and utilizing cheat protection. Anyone wishing to purchase this book should contact Amazon Systems, Merlewood, Lodge Hill RD, Farnham, Surrey, England, GU10 3RD. Price - 7.95 [Include £1.50 P+P. Telephone: 01144-252-716-669].

From the same Amazon System outfit comes two text adventures for the PC, both created using the Adventure Game Toolkit system and giving a very Infocom-like appearance to the presentation. The first, *Pork: The Great Underground Sewer System* is, not surprisingly, a send-up of **Infocom**'s *Zork*. The original creator of Pork is, apparently, unknown (although if he/she is reading this—write in!), so David Malmberg enhanced and converted it to conform to his Adventure Game Toolkit system. All the usual Zork characters and features are parodied (white house, n'all).

The second Amazon adventure, written by the Secret Art author Gil Williamson, is called *Sir Ramic Hobbs*. This is a humorous (of course) adventure based around the rescue of a princess (Anne de Pea) from the High Level Gorilla. It appears that the player's character agreed to this task after a heavy bout of mead slurping. Now, in the cold light of day, there is something of a temptation toward thinking that the whole idea might best be laid to rest in the nearest fish pond. Of course, then there wouldn't be any real excitement, would there?

Pork and *Sir Ramic Hobbs* can be purchased from the Amazon address listed above for 9.95 each (Access and Visa accepted).

Right, out of space again, I'm afraid. Join me next month — why not book the same seat? Until then, watch your six and stay frosty.

NOTE: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY.
Telephone: 01144-51-263-6306

SDC, 60 Boston Road, London, England, W7 3TR.
Telephone: 01144-1-567-7621

Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins Square,
Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ.
Telephone: 01144-268-590-766

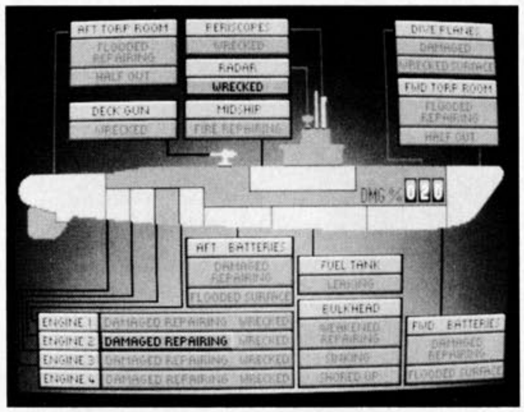
All of the above telephone numbers assume you can dial direct. If you have any trouble, contact the international operator.

CGW

"Down the Throat"

(Continued from page 51)

Alas, the current technology forces a couple of disappointing limitations on the simulation's ability to be faithfully historical. First, the program still uses generic graphics (actually, those of a Tench Class sub) to depict the bridge, binoculars, periscope and gauges of *all* the submarines in the game. Perhaps the day of additional storage capacity (CD-ROM?) will enable specific graphics for each submarine class. Second, memory limitations also force the program to follow a routine of randomly assigning submarines to the player's command, according to submarine class. These assignments add spice to the game and really personalize each war patrol or career, yet purists may be jolted by anomalies such as starting a war career in December of 1941 and being assigned S-38 out of Pearl Harbor. In point of fact, that submarine was busy defending Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines during that time period. It is better to have such minor idiosyncrasies than to lose the tremendous impact of having random ships assigned from nearly the full roster under ComSubPac.



The third disappointment with the technology will be minor to some and major to others. The documentation warns (and it is *very* correct) that using digitized speech, VGA/MCGA graphics and sound board support use so much memory that the variety of target ship graphics is significantly reduced or, as we noted on one of our computers, can actually disappear from the screen(!), but still appear on the Targeting Data Computer's gauges and, more importantly, still fire at the submarine. Although the digitized voice option is nice, it seems best to play the game a couple of times with it and then, simply avoid the problem by playing without digitized speech.

Down The Throat (Commendations)

"Down The Throat" is a submariner's term for a bow-on shot at the target. This seems particularly effective when targeting a fast escort ship, but is usually not the best choice for larger target vessels. This writer found the tactic to be the most gut-wrenching, nerve-wracking and spine-tingling method of sinking enemy vessels. Heading directly into the target and launching two or three quick torpedoes before veering off (and hoping for the best) does not lend itself to longevity in one's war career, but it *does* offer a thrilling and spectacular view when one is successful. Note, however, that a spread of torpedoes is particularly necessary with this tactic, because a dud in this situation can be fatal.

"Down The Throat" is also an apt description of how *SS2* caught this reviewer. Improved graphics and sound were to be expected, but the stronger scenarios, addition of a full-fledged campaign option and improved play balance virtually blew this jaded critic out of the water (well, at least his chair). *SS2* has torpedoed more hours of this editor's free time than he has managed to accumulate tonnage of sunken Japanese vessels.

"Up The Kilt" is submariner slang for a stern-on shot at an enemy vessel. Like "Down The Throat," it is not a high percentage tactic, but it is much safer initially for the submarine. After all, there is more room to maneuver if the torpedoes are duds or shots go awry. It is also an apt description of what can happen to gamers who play **MicroProse** games without reading the carefully crafted and well-honed documentation (i.e., they can get blind-sided).

In the case of *SS2*, one who does not read the manual will miss out on instructions delineating using the TDC to maximum advantage; tips on using the deck gun to improve one's patrol score (torpedoes, after all, are expensive); historical notes on Japanese surface movements that improve one's chances of acquiring a worthwhile target. There are also fascinating annotations on the historical details of the individual battles included in the game, tactical advice for winning at each historical scenario and points of comparison to enable players to judge their relative success for themselves.

In this reviewer's opinion, *Silent Service II* teaches historical lessons worthy of a graduate seminar in modern American history while stimulating the player with enough excitement to compare with reaching maximum "G"s on a mammoth roller-coaster. Combine this game (which is a fabulous value in itself) with Sheffield's book (as previously mentioned in this review) and one has the capacity for a decade's worth of entertainment. **CGW**

Scorpion's View

(Continued from page 44)

each party member to a certain combat mode and they will act in that way when fighting begins.

This takes some of the burden off the player and gives the NPCs a veneer of individuality, but also has drawbacks. Once set to a particular mode, the NPC stays there. If Iolo is set to be in the rear, then he will stay there, no matter what happens. He is unable to make independent judgments about what is happening, and act on his own. Which is why there is also a command mode, that brings the NPCs back under the direct control of the player.

At the other extreme we have the NPCs of **SSI**'s "Gold Box" series (*Pool of Radiance*, et. al.), who are virtually uncontrollable and often tend to act in the worst possible ways. NPC mages cast area spells with the party in the radius of effect, and that can be disastrous. Or the NPC fighters go rushing into the front line of the enemy, just as your own PC-controlled mage lets loose with a devastating fireball.

The golden mean for autonomous combat, therefore, lies somewhere between the rigid and the reckless. That is what designers should be striving towards: a way of allowing the NPC party members to fight intelligently, based on the actual circumstances of the combat, rather than limited, pre-programmed actions.

In terms of role-playing by the player, scenario designs need to be loosened up to allow for a variety of actions. *Wizardry* let a character be good, neutral, or evil, but these designations were essentially worthless. The game was played very much the same whatever the alignment, and the conclusion was the same, as well.

Ultima gets a little closer: the character can be honest or not, truthful or not, brave or not, etc. and his actions do have an effect on the game and how people react to him. However, since the *Ultimas* are created on the principle that the Avatar is a paragon of virtue, the player is eventually forced into following "the correct path" in order to complete the game.

What is needed, therefore, is a way to let players act less than "good" and then, take the "consequences" of it. They may win through to victory, but it could be a hollow one, or less than satisfactory, depending on their behavior in the game. It is also an incentive to re-play the CRPG, if only to find out what would happen if they had done things differently.

Naturally, all of this requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of the designers and programmers. Working up AI routines to handle NPC combat, and divergent story-lines based on PC actions (never mind the basic adventure itself!), is not something done overnight.

On the other hand, as we've seen, some work has already been done in these areas, so at least the designers (or some of them) are heading in the right direction. What they need to do now is keep up the pace, and work on refining, revising, and polishing the techniques. If they do this, then the CRPGs that are produced over the next few years will come closer to the "real thing." Let's keep our fingers crossed for that.

In the meantime, while we wait for the dawn of the next era of CRPGs, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: Try the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail: (Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the US) Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**

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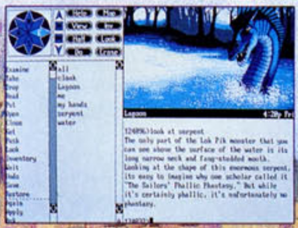
Following high school graduation, Ernie Eaglebeak had two career options: Dragon Tending or Sorcery.

Dragon Tending demanded interminably long days roasting under the acrid breath of temperamental dragons in holding pits of dirt and grime.

Sorcery offered a four-year romp through Sorcerer University — four years of outrageous frat parties, scantily-clad co-eds and reckless behavior.

Sorcerer U. also meant plenty of adventure — from battling dragons in the Simulation Lab with only arcane spells as weapons; to grappling with zesty females in real life using more, um, natural tools.

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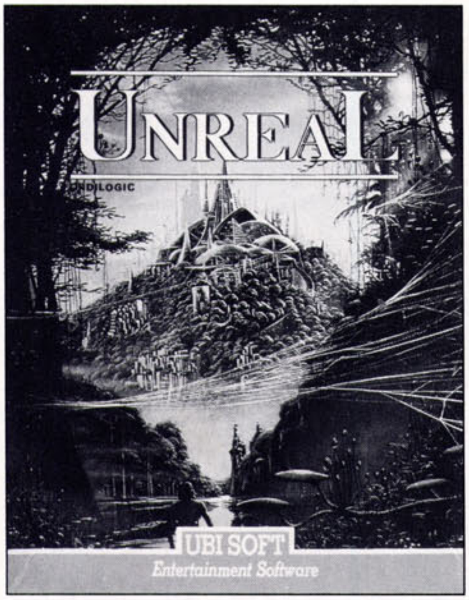


***Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All The Girls** is yet another bawdy, irreverent graphic adventure from Steve Meretzky, author of **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Leather Goddesses of Phobos** and **Zork Zero**. Despite the presence of "naughty" and "nice" modes, this game is not recommended for those who a) have weak hearts, b) believe sex is a four-letter word, or c) think college students, no matter what universe they live in, spend their free time studying.*

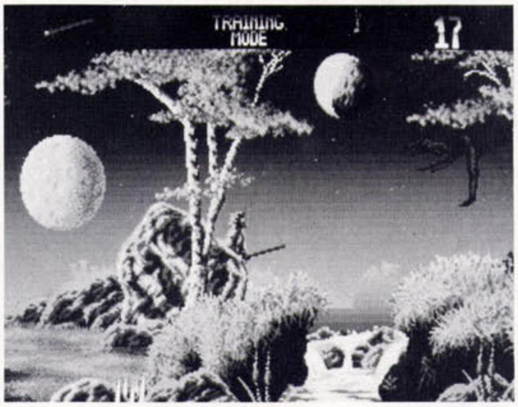
Unreality Check

UbiSoft's Unreal

by Allen L. Greenberg



TITLE:	Unreal
SYSTEM:	Amiga
PRICE:	$49.95
DEVELOPER:	Ordilogic
PUBLISHER:	UbiSoft
DISTRIBUTOR:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA



Once upon a fad, the bad guys always won. *Space Invaders*, *Centipedes* and those of their ilk were *always* victorious against the outnumbered human defenders. The creatures, as well as their programs, could play forever while their joystick-fisted challengers could only play until dinner was ready. In these more civilized days of simulated mayhem, programmers have shown mercy by providing arcaders with quests and missions, at the successful completion of which the heavies may be considered fully dead and largely out of business.

Unreal is such a world, in which the player, aided by a flying dragon, takes on a universe of nasties in order to rescue a princess from a flying fortress. *Unreal* is similar in many respects to some of the (admittedly more difficult) **Psygnosis** arcade/quest games such as *Barbarian* and *Shadow of the Beast*. These games, including *Unreal*, are clearly designed for hard-core action fanatics. Those fanatics, however, are going to have to do some exploration and object manipulation if they hope to succeed in their quests—those players who think only with their reflexes may find themselves at a loss when it comes to certain puzzling points in the game. Those who enjoy and appreciate adventure games may wish to give *Unreal* a try, but may find themselves constantly pondering the question: "Am I failing to make progress because I have failed to solve some subtle problem or because I have long since lost the circulation in my control hand and my thumb is dead?"

Unreal is an eight-level game, five levels of which are presented in a three-dimensional view. For these, the hero is seated atop a flying dragon while the action unfolds "flight-simulator" style. Without any speed control, the hero must survive the onrushing landscape which is filled with dangerous objects to be avoided and rewards to be scooped up. By pressing the joystick button, the player causes his mount to spew forth the dragon-flames which are his only weapon. For each collision the player fails to avoid, the dragon loses shield-energy. Should this defensive energy run out, the game is over.

Scattered among the objects to be gathered are extra shield power, as well as extra weapon-strength, brief bursts of invulnerability, and score bonuses. Also appearing in the sky are hints which signal the hero to bear right, left, or get ready to pick up a precious object.

The other three levels of the game are far more interesting than the dragon-flight. These are two-dimensional views of the hero *without* his dragon, attempting to survive while traveling left-to-right across the world depicted on the monitor screen. There is the traditional leaping and sword-play required here, but there are also some impasses which require thought, planning and even puzzle-solving for the player to overcome. These moments clearly form the high points of the game.

As is typical within the genre, players may proceed to the next level of the game only after successfully completing the prior level. *However*, there is an appealing innovation called the "Training Mode" included in *Unreal*. Using this feature, players may return to the beginning of the level in which their game last ended as many times as they wish, for study and practice purposes. Only after each level is mastered need the player go back and begin again with the first level in order to advance in the game.

Unfortunately, the program will not save a game in progress (although the documentation seems to indicate otherwise), but will save the highest level reached so that the player may return later to "train" at the part which is causing the most trouble.

Graphically, *Unreal* is *un*even. The opening screen features some impressive ray-traced animation, but the flight of the dragon in level one quickly loses much of the fine detail. Images of moving creatures and flying scenery are certainly colorful, but soft and vague in their overall effect. Some of this detail is recovered in the wildly colorful two-dimensional sequences, but there is trouble with the animation in these sequences and the unlucky hero becomes a bit clumsy to manipulate.

For an Amiga equipped with 1 Meg of RAM, there are sound effects abundant and in stereo. These include not only the moans of the hero and his adversaries, but also the echoing cries of the surrounding jungle. Machines with less memory will produce instead a pleasant background music.

Unreal is an ambitious arcade project with a slightly disappointing result. Certainly, the five dragon-flight levels could have benefitted from a greater variety of gameplay and more graphic detail and even the two-dimensional sequences suffer from stiff and awkward control of the main character. Overall, the effect is that the game lacks polish. Potential players, therefore, may be unwilling to invest their time and money in searching for the game's "gems" which lie scattered in the raw. *Unreal*, however, is far less demanding than the wrist-wrenching regime of the **Psygnosis** games and may, therefore, appeal to players interested in preserving their hands. After all, you've only got two.

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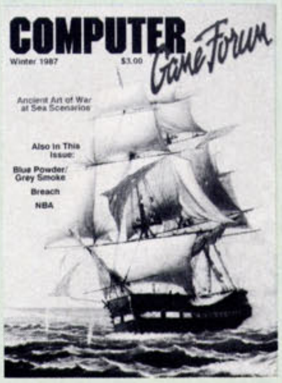
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Blasting VUXs

(Continued from page 58)

Earthling Cruiser

Androsynth Guardian

20% GM

N 80%

Chance to defeat enemy vessel

Suggested tactical maneuvers

In the Full Game, always attack with a VUX first, if possible. If the VUX arrives in mid-battle, his opponent will probably have considerable velocity, and will move out of laser range almost immediately.

The secret to using the **Ilwrath Avenger** is to learn where it is when it is invisible. *Since the screen always centers on the midpoint between the two ships, the Ilwrath is always diagonally opposite its opponent.* This means when your enemy gets near the center of the screen, you must be there too, so open fire! It is an unknown fact that when you uncloak by firing your hellblast, your ship is *automatically* oriented to point at your opponent's ship! Thus, if your enemy has maneuvered around behind you, you can turn around instantly by cloaking and immediately firing your hellblast (and this is the recommended way to toast Arilou Skiffs). When fighting Earthlings, simply close (you are marginally faster) and breathe fire continuously to intercept incoming nukes.

Star Control Trivia #1: The name "Ilwrath" comes from an envelope I saw at the post office which was being sent to a Ms. McIlwrath in Glasgow, Scotland. I didn't see the "Mc" at first, and I swear, my first thought was that they must be sending that envelope to an alien. I am sure that somewhere there is a nice little Scottish lady laughing and saying, "Oh those crazy Americans! Here's one now calling me an evil, giant, religiously-intolerant space-spider—ha, ha, ha, how cute!" Hmm. . . on second thought, if I am ever found murdered, beaten with bagpipes, or poisoned with haggis, please contact the authorities.

The **Umgah Drone** can defeat any ship in the Alliance Fleet given just a few seconds at close range — the trick being to get those few seconds. A favorite Umgah tactic is to zip backwards right up next to its enemy. If the anti-matter cone is up through the maneuver, there is a chance of it grazing the enemy as you zip past for a few bonus points of damage (especially important against the Arilou). For precision retro-movement, thrust at the same time as you zip backwards. The result is a jerky, half-speed maneuver which many commanders find more useful than the normal mode.
The Umgah's anti-matter cone also makes an effective shield against most Alliance missiles. Notable exceptions are the Chenjesu's whole photon crystal and the Earthlings' nuclear missile which pass through the conical field unharmed. The only reason not to keep the cone up all the time is its negative impact on fuel, which you need for retro-propulsion. Unlike all other vessels which regain fuel continuously in small increments, the Umgah receives all its power in one big whack, after a considerable delay. Each time the Umgah uses its anti-matter cone, this delay is reset to maximum, so if you keep the cone up, you will never regain fuel.

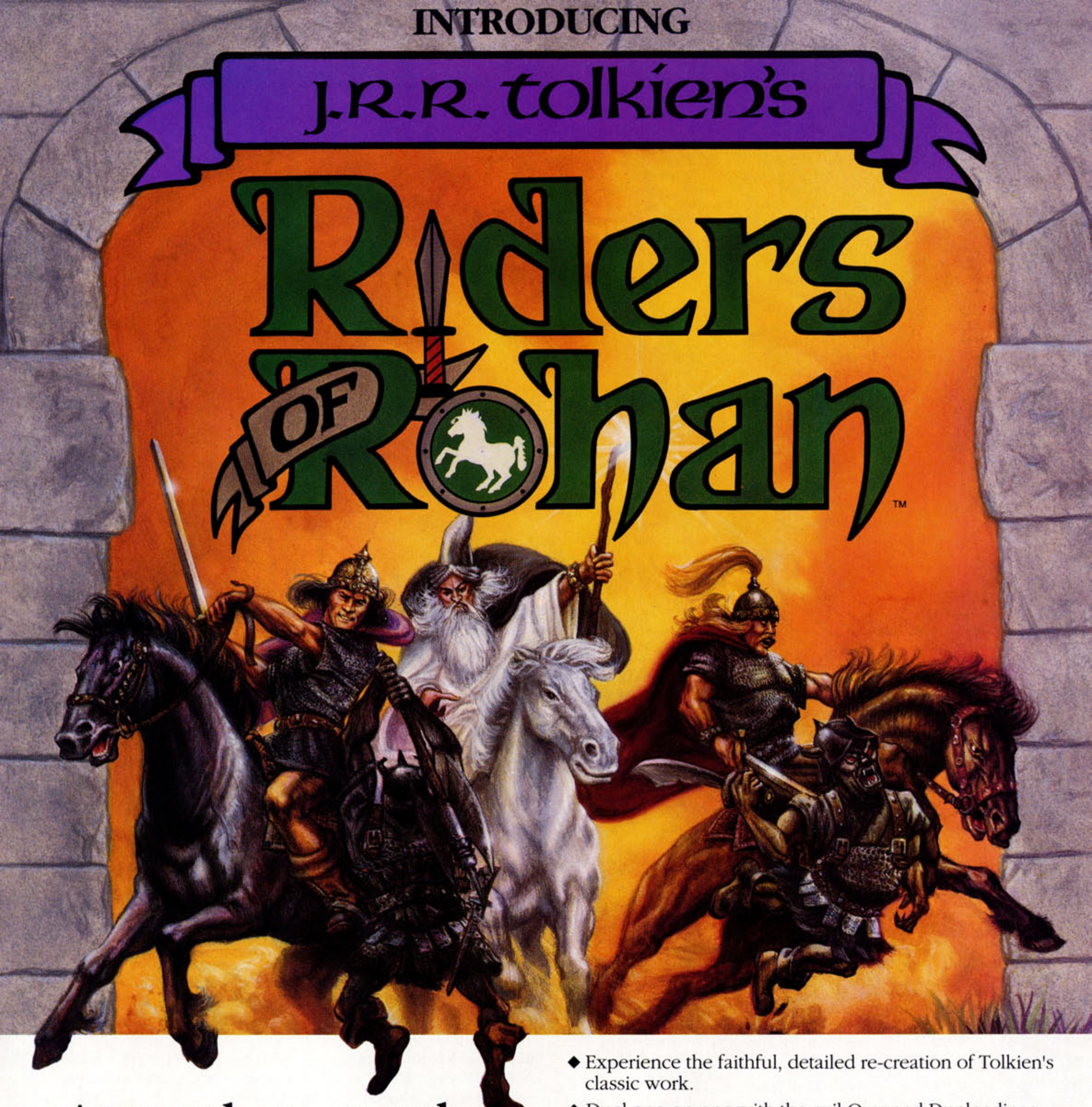
	Chenjesu Broodhome	Yehat Terminator	Mmrnmhrm X-Form	Arilou Skiff	Syreen Penetrator	Earthling Cruiser	Shofixti Scout
Ur-Quan Dreadnought	45% EM Q / A LW 55%	35% CF / LD 65%	30% MY / A 70%	20% CF I / BL 80%	20% FS / DL 80%	10% GM P / A 90%	5% K / DL 95%
Mycon Podship	55% EM W / G 45%	65% AW / GB 35%	50% AX / GM 50%	70% AH / GM 30%	15% SH / D 85%	45% GM W / GW 55%	10% HK / D 90%
Spathi Discriminator	60% MQ / I JO 40%	55% B / I JO 45%	45% U / I JO 55%	60% CI / I JO 40%	50% S / JB 50%	45% GM P / AI 55%	20% IJ / A IO 80%
Androsynth Guardian	60% EM Q / N 40%	60% A / OT 40%	50% U / OT 50%	60% C / OT 40%	80% S / OT 20%	20% GM / N 80%	25% J / OT 75%
VUX Intruder	65% EM Q / GC 35%	50% J / V 50%	70% MY / VG 30%	45% CI / BV 55%	35% J / DV 65%	20% M / A GW 80%	10% BJ / D 90%
Ilwrath Avenger	75% M / AI 25%	75% J / A 25%	70% AX / A 30%	50% CI J / A 50%	50% J / A 50%	20% GM / AW 80%	40% BJ / A 60%
Umgah Drone	80% EM Q / AR 20%	70% J / A 30%	65% MY / AR 35%	65% CI J / A 35%	60% J / A 40%	75% GM / AR 25%	45% J / A 55%

The Tactical Analyzer

So, an Androsynth Guardian has just made monatomic hydrogen gas out of your Earthling Cruiser (bummer). All is not lost! To determine what ship you should pick to toast the pesky Androsynth with, just consult your handy-dandy Star Control(TM) Tactical Combat Analyzer (a.k.a. the "Greg-o-Matic").

Find the Androsynth Guardian in the Hierarchy Ship list, then look along the line of boxes which indicate how it fares against Alliance ships. Find where the Androsynth's row intersects with the Earthling's column, and observe the provided data.

Ah-ha! You didn't have a prayer against those clones with odds like 80/20 against! Looking at these statistics leads you to the conclusion that the Syreen Penetrator is your best bet, with a whopping 80/20 advantage. The percentages listed assume that both combatants are experienced with their ships, make use of their respective special abilities, and use the tactics suggested in the next chapter of this article (yes, the Alliance Fleet ship breakdowns and specialized tactics await in next issue's installment). The computer opponent is especially good at shooting long distances with great accuracy, and at maneuvering fast ships. Consequently, when fighting a computer-controlled Ur-Quan, Androsynth, Spathi, or Arilou, adjust the numbers in favor of the computer, especially if it is set to the "Awesome" skill level. **CGW**



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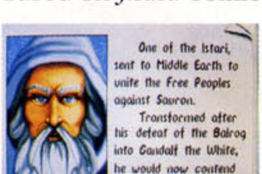
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A Feast for Some

(Continued from page 32)

for by end-game pressure. Desert spaces, which dominate the final continent, require a week per space unless a time spell is cast (which cuts down travel to a day per space, which eats up the calendar pretty quickly in its own right). Along the entire quest, the player is taunted by signs reminding him of the time constraints of the game. They mean it, too.

The battles are probably the most interesting part of the game, which is good since the player will be spending most his time fighting them. Each of the up to five units per side maneuvers on a five-space-by-six-space tactical battle map and engages enemy units. In combat, players must be concerned about proper tactics and mixing combined arms. An army with some missile (arrow or spell casting) and "tank" (knights and troll) units is a good combination. Using many of the exotic unit types to their best advantage is an enjoyable learning experience and pinning the enemy's best units becomes a crucial combat tactic. Trying out different tactics and techniques to use and counter the various kinds of units in the game is an important element of the game's appeal.



The final intriguing element of *King's Bounty* is what this reviewer calls expanding megalomania. There is some sort of intangible "charge" that comes out of seeing one's character become a more powerful warlord, leading bigger armies, gaining an ever-increasing commission, subduing ever larger foes, and so forth. While this is hardly an original concept (it dates back to the first games of *Dungeons & Dragons*), it still holds an endearing appeal when done well. In *King's Bounty*, this "Monty Haul" brand of adventuring is exquisitely executed, rewarding the player with plenty of strokes on his way to finding the Sceptre.

King's Bounty, A Movable Feast?

Most adventure gamers who love epic games of the *Bard's Tale* ilk had better be reminded of a few things. *King's Bounty* is a quick, self-contained game of a far, far shorter duration then the current epics available on the market today. Another thing traditional adventure gamers should be reminded of is that *King's Bounty* is an *army* game of large battles and sweeping continents, not a six-characters-hit-the-dungeon variety of role-playing game. If these gamers feel cheated by games which are of a more introductory calibre (e.g., if they thought **SSI**'s *Sword of Aragon* was too simple), they should avoid this one. If, however, quicker, cleaner, and simpler fantasy/strategy games are one's forte, there is a feast of fun at the *King's Bounty*.

Advice And Hints

Don't recruit ghosts. They have a tendency to grow beyond a player's control level and be the demise of one's own army!

Trolls are excellent "grunts" to put in the front lines, as they regenerate all of their hit points during each round of combat. Be sure to make a note where you can recruit them.

Elves are the best archers, and should be recruited to a player's maximum limits whenever possible. They have plenty of shots and can grind up huge units from afar. **CGW**

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Westward Ho! (Toward Japan, That Is)

An Overview of the Evolution of CRPGs on Dedicated Game Machines

by Roe R. Adams, III



Serious game players, especially CRPG players, have for years looked down upon the dedicated game machines as "mere arcade toys", and for years they were right. Those coin-ops without a coin slot *did* provide a lot of fun for people, but when they wanted a *real game*, they turned to their Apple II or Commodore (IBMs were too snooty, in those days, to stoop to having games on them). Even when the Second Wave of game machines debuted in 1987, no one felt any different. These new machines were actually powerful computers, but expressly dedicated to game play. Then *The Legend of Zelda* arrived from Japan on the **Nintendo Entertainment System** (**NES**) in the fall of 1988, and heads began to turn.

Now, a truly great game *should* make people go out and buy the machine that plays the game. This has been a truism since the dawn of computer history: Software drives the marketplace! Basically, the machine specs are really irrelevant; it is only the software that is available for a machine that matters to the consumer. Since I have 18 computers at home, I hardly *needed* to buy another machine. Yet, along came *Zelda*, and in 1988 a Nintendo was suddenly needed. Then, in '89, *Phantasy Star II* came along. It required a **MegaDrive/Genesis** and an additional Power Base adapter so the original *Phantasy Star* (designed for the **Sega Master System**) could be played. Now, *Ziria* in '90 necessitates a **Turbo Grafx 16** with CD-ROM player. Three great games, three new machines. (Sigh.)

You will notice one common thread, however. All three games are Japanese-designed CRPGs. While America has been concentrating on yet another *Wizardry*, *Ultima,* or *Might & Magic*, each bigger and more complex than the one before it, the Japanese have slowly carved out a completely new niche in the realm of CRPG.

The first CRPG entries were *Rygar* and *Deadly Towers* on the **NES**. These differed considerably from the "action adventure" games that had drawn quite a following on the machines beforehand. Action adventures were basically arcade games done in a fantasy setting such as *Castlevania*, *Trojan*, and *Wizards & Warriors*. The new CRPGs had some of the trappings of regular CRPGs. The character could get stronger over time and gain extras which were not merely a result of a short-term "Power-Up." There were specific items that could be acquired which boosted fighting or defense on a permanent basis. Primitive stores were introduced with the concept that a player could buy some-

Special Bonus Section
Cartridge Game
Coverage

thing to aid him on his journey. The dungeon mazes were incredibly simple by U.S. standards, but still, there was a hint of a CRPG.

When *The Legend of Zelda* burst upon the scene in fall of 1988, it hit like a nova. Although it still had many action-adventure features, it was definitely a CRPG. Fine graphics, exciting monsters, intriguing puzzle mazes and a wide variety of items to acquire were hallmarks of this game. But above all, it was entertaining. For most of the year, *Zelda* and *Super Mario Brothers* (the original) traded places back and forth as to which would be number one on Nintendo's charts, and the race was on. **Sega** came in with *Aztec Adventure* and *Alex Kidd* on the **Sega Master System** about this time.

In 1989, the store shelves began to fill up with an amazing collection of game machine CRPGs. Three of the best on the Nintendo were *Zelda II: The Legend of Link*, *Faxanadu* and *Dragon Warrior*. With the introduction of these last two games, America was also slowly discovering that Japan had been creating these games for many years. *Faxandu* was an update of a best-selling CRPG in Japan called *Xanadu* and released on the NEC-9801 machine in 1984. *Dragon Warrior* was really *Dragonquest I*, Japan's megaselling CRPG. When *Dragonquest 4* debuted in Japan (in early 1989), it reportedly sold *one million cartridges* the first day of sales.

Sega countered in 1989 with two blockbusters, *Ys: The Vanished Omens*, and *Phantasy Star*. *Ys* was also a Japanese CRPG with a long pedigree. It began as the next game from **Falcom** after *Xanadu* on the NEC-9801, but its graphic style ended up being crossbred with the hot American graphics of **Sierra**'s *King's Quest* series. In 1990, *Ys IV* will be released in Japan, along with an animation series produced solely for video tape, based on the games.

It was *Phantasy Star*, however, that was to be the big shot in the arm for **Sega**, **Nintendo**'s major competitor who was, at that time, being buried under a ton of **NES** titles and aggressive marketing. It is accepted wisdom that the tremendous response to this game propped up Sega long enough for it to introduce the **Genesis** 16-bit machine last Christmas. *Phantasy Star* was *really* different. It was a science-fiction game with a neat twisting plot, good sound, and a large array of weapons, armor, spells, and other assorted goodies. It also was the first Japanese import to employ a team concept. Periodically throughout the game, characters would join a player's team in order to help him/her win, each bringing unusual skills or magical talents. Yet, what actually set *Phantasy Star* apart from all the other imported games was its fantastic combat system. Not since *Dungeon Master* had such a good and explicit graphic combat system been seen. No mere spot animation was used, but large, fully animated monsters came right at the player. There was also a large variety of monsters to encounter, each with different talents. This *was* serious gaming for many CRPG fanatics.



Last year also saw the coattail effect of traditional bestselling CRPGs being ported over onto dedicated game machines as the new market of machines blossomed into money trees. Games like *Ultima*, *Shadowgate*, and *Defender of the Crown* appeared to mixed reviews. These stalwarts of computer fame were not perceived, by many of the players, to be as exciting as the Japanese imports.

The big CRPG guns to be released on dedicated game machines this fall form quite a collection. On the **NES**, one can watch for *Dragon Warrior II*, *Final Fantasy* (another hot four-part series from Japan), *Crystalis*, *Tombs & Treasure* (on the **Infocom** label, no less), *Swords & Serpents, Dungeon Magic, Ultima II* (really *IV: The Quest for the Avatar*), and *Wizardry I* (celebrating its 9th anniversary).

Sega's *Phantasy Star II* just hit very impressively with a 6-Megabyte cart on the **Genesis** (see the review in this issue). Players better really hustle through *Phantasy Star II*, because Phantasy Star III should be out in January. Another monster CRPG, *The Sword of Vermillion*, is being released here for Christmas, so **Genesis** fans are going to be stuffed with dynamite RPGs like a holiday turkey.

NEC is just getting its **TurboGrafx-16** marketing revamped and in gear. Introductory-level CRPGs like *Double Dungeon* and *Neutopia*, which are currently available on carts, simply do not do justice to the machine's capabilities. Much, much better is expected to come from NEC, next year. Look for the CD-ROM attachment to be the hottest gaming item of 1991. In Japan, there are currently 26 CD-ROM based games already available for this machine, including *Ys I & II* (scheduled for Christmas release in the U.S. on one disk) and a truly gigantic game, *Ziria*, which seems to be about the size of 2 or 3 *Ultimas* put together. IF NEC can handle the mammoth translating job, *Ziria* could be *the* game hit of 1991 on the game machines (unless, of course, **Nintendo** counters with *Zelda III* or *Dragon Warrior III*, and **Sega** with *Phantasy Star III*).

Christmas 1990, as well as all of 1991, is shaping up to be a great time for CRPG players, since the three game machine companies plan to pour massive amounts of effort into becoming the number one RPG machine. The smart money is on Nintendo — solid marketing and hundreds of titles. The class money is on **Genesis**, the flashiest graphics around with two big hits. The real longshot, which may indeed come in, is the **TurboGrafx-16** with a wave-of-the-future CD-ROM player. No matter who wins, the players will certainly have fun. **CGW**

Wishing on a *Phantasy Star II*

by Roe R. Adams, III

The Winds of Change are blowing strongly through the electronic FRP realm. Long the province of computers, now sophisticated game machines are beginning to challenge for a share of that realm. Riding high on the shock wave of those winds is **Sega**'s *Phantasy Star II.*

Two years ago, when *Phantasy Star I* debuted on the **Sega 8-bit Master System**, it created quite a stir among the players. That is nothing compared to the impact of *Phantasy Star II*, which was created to showcase **Sega**'s new 16-bit *Genesis* machine.

The game is a whopping 6-megabyte cartridge! That is currently the largest game available on any of the game machines. The 16-bit graphics are gorgeous, but the real fun lies in the science fiction story plot.

Continuing the plot begun in Phantasy Star I (but not necessary to play this game), the player finds his character on Mota, the middle planet of the Algo Star System. Closest to the sun is Palm where the rulers and academics live, while the dark mysterious ice planet of Dezo lies the farthest out.

Mota is a tropical farm planet and every aspect of Mota is controlled by a computer system called Mother Brain, which is housed secretly somewhere. For years, things have been idyllic on Mota, but now strange and deadly biomonsters are appearing all over the planet. Obviously, these were grown in Mother Brain's biosystems labs, but no one knows how this can be occurring. Mother Brain, in fact, says it is *not* happening, but a quick trip outside Paseo, the planetary capital, will certainly show the player how wrong she is! Biomonsters abound everywhere.

The player's character "works" for the Commander of Mota who, in turn, assigns the character to enter the Biosystem labs and retrieve the system's recorder, so that he might ascertain what has malfunctioned. On this assignment, the protagonist is accompanied by his adopted sister Nei, part-human and part-biomonster.

Throughout the adventure, people with unique skills and talents suddenly appear at the hero's home in Paseo and express their willingness to join him and aid in his endeavors. So, one should periodically make it a point to teleport back to Paseo and see if any welcome visitors have appeared. A total of six people, in addition to Nei, will come to one's aid, including: a Hunter, Guardian, Biologist, Wrecker (great against the robots!) and Thief. Only the thief can steal one of the major items in the game. However, as the active party can only consist of four people at a time, "one must choose his friends wisely!"

As the game progresses, all kinds of weird computer malfunctions impede one's path. Paseo is an island in the middle of four dams. These control the water level in an artificial lake used for irrigation. Suddenly, the dams close completely, drying up the lake. The world-wide Climatrol system begins to produce freakish weather and computer-controlled robots attack the party of heroes.

The game is structured in a very Japanese fashion. That is, it is highly linear with a major monster/boss character to defeat at the end of each segment before progress can be resumed. While these games tend to be more simplistic in terms of design than



typical American CRPGs, these games can be very entertaining. The player always has a real sense of purpose and direction. His focus is maintained, as well as a high sense of adventure and expectation.

Once all the problems are resolved on Mota, the hero journeys to Dezo for a another entire planet to explore. The visual effect on Dezo is quite striking as the game overlays a heavy mist over all the landscape. It is really eerie to wander about Dezo. The Esper Mansion in Alplatin is especially important, though very well hidden from casual wanderers. While most of Phantasy Star's dungeons are three or four levels deep, the last one on Dezo, Guaron, is a whopping sixteen levels!

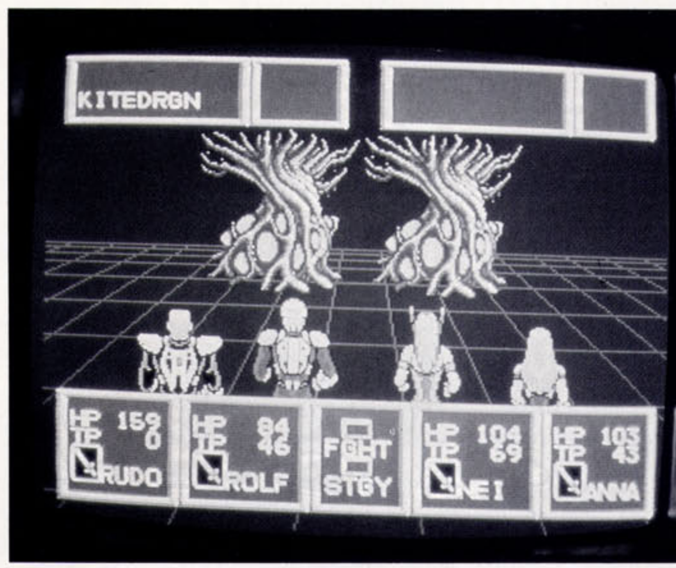
The finale of the game takes place at a secret location in space called Noah (hint! hint!) where Mother Brain is *really* housed. A really superb animated ending awaits one's victory.

For those players who love exotic weapons and spells, *Phantasy Star II* will be a real delight. Besides huge lists of possible things to buy or spells to acquire, an added twist is that only certain characters can use or cast specific items/spells. So, the player must frequently make decisions about the team's makeup depending on the weapons and magic spells needed to overcome various roadblocks. It also comes as a bit of a shock to a player towards the end of the game to find a shop selling a deluxe vulcan cannon gun that shoots megadamage for the princely sum of 12,600. Amazingly enough, that is exactly what is needed to blow one's way through the monsters of a particular enemy stronghold. The only problem is that the Hunter (who was the second person to join the party) is probably back at the hero's house, because the player long ago replaced him with more talented party members. *Oops!*

The really great "must see" feature of this game is its stable of outstanding animated combat sequences. The monsters are large and mean! Each has a regular weapon, claw, or sting, and often a second special attack form. Every time the creature attacks, an animated sequence shows its whole body attacking in

the different modes. When the players strike, each character steps forward and hacks with his sword, shoots his gun, or casts a spell. The game offers very impressive full-figure animation. The spellcasting is particularly intense with fabulous special effects for each type of spell used.

The only thing that really mars this fine RPG is, of all things, the excessive documentation that Sega has included with the game. Apparently, Sega U.S. has a rather low opinion of the game-playing ability of the average Genesis owner, despite the huge success of Phantasy Star I over the past two years. Besides the normal 48-page manual, included with the game is a fold-out map of Moto and Dezo. Unfortunately, it shows not only all the terrain features and villages, but also all the enemy strongholds and *secret* locations. On the back is the exhaustive list of every spell and item, showing who can use it and what properties it has against what monsters. If this were not game-destroying enough, shrinkwrapped on the outside of the box (because it is too thick to fit inside!) is a 113 page booklet, erroneously called a Hint Book.



Now, the book is very beautiful, all in color, with great drawings, tables, and maps. It is far better than its usual American counterpart, which is non-color, very skimpy, and usually gouges the player for additional $12.95. So, what is the problem? Well, the book is not a hint book, but an extremely detailed walkthrough of the game. Any player who reads the book has no need for ever playing the game. The player is told what to expect and when and where to expect it. Players are provided with the contents and pricing for every shop in the game, the complete maps to all the dungeons and towers, the exact location of every chest in the dungeons (also which hold the real prizes), when new members are waiting at home for you, and even the optimum team configuration for difficult segments. This "book" reduces playing of this outstandingly designed RPG to the level of pablum. One should not even consider spending $69.95 for this game unless he/she intends to securely lock that hint book and map away (after photocopying the weapon and spell side first — *that* is handy) and not to take it out until the game is finished or one is hopelessly bogged down.

For those with the willpower not to be tempted by the Dark Force of Marketing, Phantasy Star II is a challenging and enjoyable intermediate level game with superb combat and animated graphics.



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Circle Reader Service #67

Scorpion's Mail

(Continued from page 30)

Of course, first you have to discover how to get below. Noticed a torch anywhere? Too bad it's stuck (all that dried mud . . . wonder what would work . . .).

Ultima VI: Not surprisingly, many letters come in about this game. Lately, I've been asked by several readers about the "cheat menu" mentioned in, of all things, *The Official Book of Ultima*. How Origin ever let that slip by them, I don't know. The cheat menu *does* exist, and it *is* in the game (at least through version 3.2). I am not going to tell you how to access it, at least not publicly (if you really want to know, you can send me a letter . . . uhh, Fred, I think we're gonna need more room in here now!). Moving to another subject, some people are having a hard time finding all the mages with spells for sale. The four of them are located: in Cove, north of the Lycaeum, north of Britain, and north of Skara Brae. By the way, Xiao will not sell you eighth level spells. She's supposed to do this once you receive Armageddon from the Wisp, but apparently there's a bug that prevents her from doing that. The only 8th level spell I know of that you can buy is Resurrection (someone else sells that one).

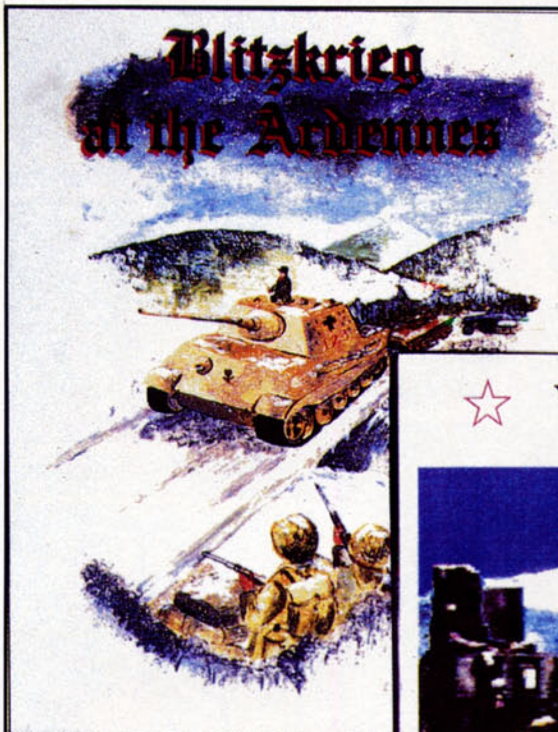
Ultima IV: Questions have been asked about the final dungeon. First, yes, you absolutely need a full party of eight (including the Avatar) and every one of them must be alive. So, try not to let anyone die on the way down. Secondly, if you have gotten this far into the game, you should be able to answer the questions asked in the Codex Chamber itself. After all, the idea is that you spent the game learning about the attributes and principles of virtue, so you ought to know what they are and what they represent (I admit to becoming a bit peeved when someone asks for the complete list of answers). If you don't know the answer, you end up (after being booted out) at some location that provides the answer (Moonglow, for instance, if the correct response is "Truth"). The one exception is the prime axiom. To learn *that*, you must make note of *all* the visions seen in the shrines, which are runes you have to translate into English.

Journey: Along the way, our stalwart party meets an elf with a shy nature. Well, maybe more suspicious than shy. She wants to know you're okay before she sticks around to do anything for you. Now, if you could just give her some sort of personal reference. You know, like, you're the friend of someone?

Tangled Tales: A few dungeon delvers are running into trouble with the mist door on the way to Xavier's lair. Life would be a lot easier if only you had Riley's girl friend in the party. If you don't know what to do about her, have a chat with Drek.

And that's about it for the mail room this time around. If you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

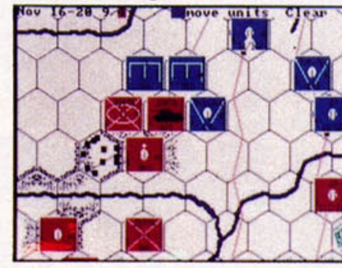
On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a SASE if you live in the US): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028. **CGW**



Scrolling Tactical Maps



Blitzkrieg



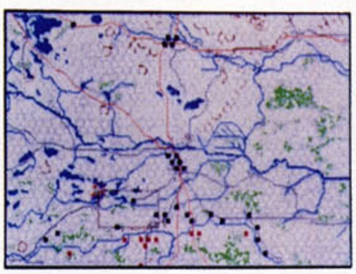
White Death





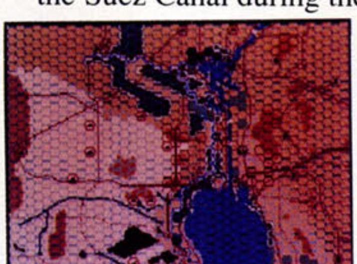
Suez '73

Strategic Maps



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As in the best FRPs, the knights and lords, wizards and clerics of the court of Camelot are yours to befriend and command. As they undertake their quests, they can interact with the peasants, warriors, maidens, nobles, bandits, and other folk of the time, growing and improving their abilities and skills.



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Sneak Preview

(Continued from page 38)

back to the base during the second scenario. However, the program does not allow the player to *use* these missiles during either the fifth or sixth scenario, simply having the player's on-screen characters radio their commanding officer that they are "saving" the missiles. We originally thought that the game was forcing us to save the missiles until the final scenario, but we couldn't use them there, either. That may be a result of having an incomplete version, however.

Finally, the sixth scenario is the *coup de grace*. The player can maneuver over a battlefield that scrolls to almost four times the size of the "killing fields" in the other scenarios. In this battle, the player will command whichever damaged and fatigued squad he has led successfully through the fifth scenario.

Should the player be successful in destroying the Kurita mobile headquarters, he returns to Morgan Kell and receives the information he needs to rescue his father. From that point, he can summon the DropShip (with the new F10 function) and get ready for the sequel.

Command Disposition

Although *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* takes a decidedly different direction in terms of game mechanics and appearance than *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception*, it would appear that **Infocom** has made the right decision in creating a game that will offer more appeal to those who play the *BattleTech* boardgame. Those of us who are more intrigued by the *BattleTech* novels will probably still enjoy the *MechWarrior* series more because the simulation aspect treats the 'mech pilots as heroic individuals. In *Revenge*, the system deals with the 'mechs more as military units.

Frankly, *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* should have a decidedly larger following than *Inception* because it is truer to the genre. Now, if **Infocom** was to add a construction set and scenario editor to the mix, they would have a megahit on their hands.

CGW



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The battle of Gettysburg has long been regarded as the turning point of the American Civil War. The timing and location of the battle depended entirely upon the decisions made by Union General George Gordon Meade and Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

Decision at Gettysburg places you in the headquarters of either the Union Army of the Potomac or the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. You will have 147 square miles of territory over which to maneuver, the same that confronted both Meade and Lee.

The decisions that are made against those of the computer will control the location of the battle and the manner in which it will be fought.

DECISION AT GETTYSBURG ALLOWS THE SIMULATION PLAYER TO:

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COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS:
640K DOS 2.1 thru 3.3. One Floppy Drive (Hard Disk Highly Recommended). Graphics: HGC, CGA (not in color), EGA, VGA on either IBM PC, XT, AT, PS2, Compatibles

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Feature	TIGLON	SSI
VGA	YES	NO
Menu Driven	YES	NO
Real time play	YES	NO
Campaign area > 147 miles	YES	NO
Use all available men	YES	NO
Send out patrols	YES	NO
Stage the battle at a different location vs. historical	YES	NO
Improved graphics	YES	NO
Higher price	NO	YES
	$49.95	$59.95





TIGLON SOFTWARE SYSTEMS, INC.

Continuing Education

(Continued from page 22)

mands in the way LucasFilm's SCUMM system does, but my fears were unjustified. The menus contain a full complement of verbs (120+) and nouns. The player has access to all the words needed to solve the game, reducing the 'guess-the-parser' problem, the program supplies only the appropriate prepositions for a certain verb, reducing the parser's "duh, what?" responses, and the noun list is constantly updated to include all of the touchable, lookable, tasteable items at the current location, eliminating the "you do not see the 'what's it' here" response. Yet for all these pluses, I consistently end up type all my commands. I find I can simply rap out "WEAR THE BODICE" in half the time it takes to search two menus and make two mouse clicks. Frankly, I find the menu system to be of little use except to suggest possible commands in tough puzzle situations. Fortunately, with the swipe of a function key, the menu system can be tucked away and brought out for the occasional reference.

>LISTEN

Sound-card support has become a standard in adventure games and, like most games on the market, *Spellcasting 101* has an excellent score written by a voluntarily anonymous source (take a bow, Arfing Dog, whoever you are). With an AdLib card, or, better yet, a Roland sound system, the sounds are a real treat. I cast the BIP spell (create romantic music) just to enjoy the beautiful tune.

On top of the sound-card score, Legend has outdone the competition again by including the trademarked **RealSound** digitized noises in the adventure. Birds tweet, dragons roar, and doors creak along Ernie's path to wizardom. It's a cute feature and another first for adventure games.

>STATUS

Spellcasting 101 is a *quality* piece of software. The interface is clean, the parser is excellent, the documentation and packaging goodies are cute, and the story is Steve Meretzky at his best. It is obvious that the Legend Group knows the genre, understands what the market is missing and what gamers want, and is dedicated to creating genre-advancing stuff. If their future releases, which include a time travel adventure and a sequel to *Spellcasting 101*, are of the same technical and storytelling caliber as this product, Legend Entertainment will turn the adventure game market on its ear.

Spellcasting 101 will be released for the IBM format in early October with a suggested retail price of $59.95.

CGW

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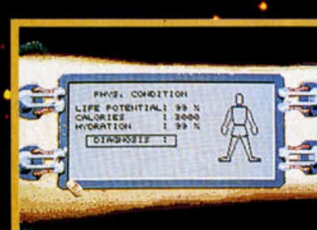


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Bill & Ted's Excellent Trivia Contest

Hey dudes! Want to win a triumphant T-shirt? Just answer the ten questions below about our most excellent movie and the bodacious new computer game by Capstone Software. The fifty CGW readers with the most correct answers will receive a Bill & Ted T-shirt. Excellent, dudes!

1. What is Genghis Khan's favorite junk food?

2. Where do Bill & Ted first meet Rufus?
(We know this is easy – hey, you're Bill & Ted fans, what else do you expect?)

3. What does the telephone operator usually say?

4. Whose picture hangs in Beethoven's music room?
(Hint: There's another computer game just out about him.)

5. What is the name of Bill & Ted's band?
(Five extra points for correct spelling, dudes!)

6-9. Name four famous dead dudes (from the game or movie) that Bill & Ted meet on their excellent adventure.

10. Who is Missy, anyway?

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Have You Got What It Takes to be an Ace?

In celebration of the release of our new World War One dogfighting simulation, *Red Baron*, we've decided to have a little fun. We'll be giving away five replicas of Germany's most coveted award, the **Blue Max**, and twenty autographed copies of *Red Baron*. Just answer the following questions and send us your answers. The twenty top-scoring submissions with the earliest postmark will win autographed copies of *Red Baron*, with the Blue Max awards going to the top five winners. In case of a tie, the winner will be chosen from a random drawing of the competing entries. Sound pretty simple? Take a look at the questions ... it's a contest we think even the crazed Mick Mannock would be proud of.

1. Who was the "Black Knight", how many kills did he have, and from which province did he hail?

2. Which famous pilot was strangled with his own Blue Max in 1920 during a street battle in the city of Harburg, Germany?

3. Where was the throttle control on the Albatross D.V?

4. Which Jasta 40 ace painted a white stag on the fuselage of his Fokker D.VII?

5. Which French ace regularly flew over his parents' house and waved to them after missions?

6. Which high-ranking German ace became a national celebrity in the United States while touring the country as a barnstormer?

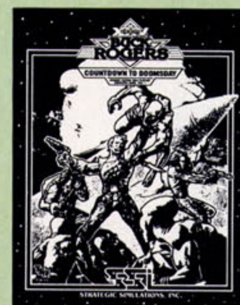
7. Who regularly hunted balloons with Frank Luke until his death on September 18, 1918?

Send your answers to:

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Just answer the following questions. Send your name, address, T-shirt size, and answers to *Computer Gaming World*, **Buck Rogers** Game Contest Dept., P.O. Box 730, Yorba Linda, CA 92686-9963. The top twenty scores will receive a prize package including:

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2) The TSR BUCK ROGERS® Role-Playing Game
3) BUCK ROGERS Comic Modules
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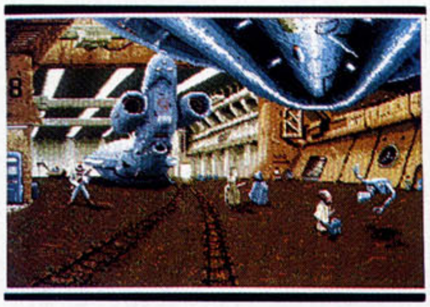
(*on your entry please specify which computer format you would like* - COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY is available for the IBM PC, Amiga and C64/128). In case of a tie, winners will be chosen randomly from the entries with the most correct answers.

1) In which century does Buck "re-awaken?"
2) On what computer FRP system is COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY based?
3) What is the name of the TSR novel that is included in specially marked COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY game boxes?

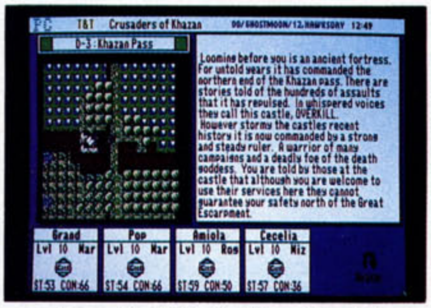
STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.



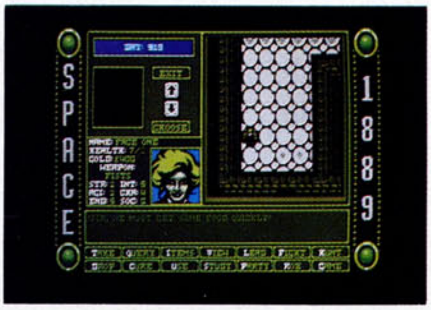
Savage Empire (Origin)



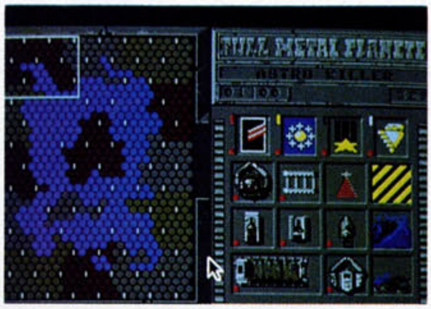
B.A.T. (UbiSoft)



Tunnels & Trolls (New World)



Space 1889 (Paragon)



Full Metal Planet

Buying Guide

(Continued from page 24)

disk and VGA required, $59.95) is an interactive movie in the tradition of *Mean Streets*. The 256 color VGA graphics are hotter than the earlier product and the adventure elements, as well as game elements like a more efficient "point and click" reverse parser, seem stronger than the earlier game.

Fans of pulp science fiction and *Ultima* will apparently have their hands full in the new *Worlds of Ultima* series. The first release from **Origin** is *The Savage Empire*, a "Jules Verne meets Edgar Rice Burroughs in an Arthur Conan Doyle Production"-style game where the good-guy scientists find themselves in a lost valley of the dinosaurs (IBM, $59.95).

Lucasfilm's *The Secret of Monkey Island* (IBM, $59.95) uses the familiar "point and click" style reverse parser from *Maniac Mansion* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*. As has been his habit with each new release, however, Ron Gilbert has made the parser even more efficient. *The Secret of Monkey Island* places the player in the role of a would-be pirate and forces him to solve three basic portions of the game: swordsmanship, thievery and treasure hunting. The game is absolutely inundated with both self-effacing humor and charming and not-so-charming characters. Also, the puzzles are challenging, even *with* the reverse parser.

Adventure gamers who haven't read the sneak preview of *Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All The Girls* from **Legend Entertainment** (see p. 20) need to complete their homework by doing so, right now. Available on IBM format, the game will be available direct from MicroProse.

Hard Nova (**Electronic Arts**, IBM, $49.95) is a science fiction adventure which immediately reminds players of **EA**'s earlier *Sentinel Worlds* game. The interface and documentation are friendly enough with a "guided tour" type of tutorial insuring that the player is familiar with all the game's controls before any serious disasters can confront the player. The game mechanics still involve piloting a spaceship from planet to planet, ship-to-ship combat, personal combat and interaction with non-player characters. Although the latter function uses the familiar multiple-choice conversation method, the conversations and encounters seem more "fleshed out" and meaningful than in previous games which have used this artifice.

New World Computing continues its exciting association with play-by-mail and pen and paper game company **Flying Buffalo, Inc.** with *Tunnels & Trolls* (IBM, $49.95). Like the successful translation of *Nuclear War* from card game to computer, capturing the flavor of the original game's play while adding the spice of computer game play to it, this computer role-playing game will make the classic solitaire adventures from *Tunnels & Trolls* come to life on the computer screen. Now, there is no more flipping pages from 8A to 16D and back to 2C in order to know how to roll the dice. Now, Liz Danforth has the stories branching smoothly from one predicament . . . er . . . situation to another.

Strategy for Sandy

If traditional chess is too tame, **Interplay**'s *Battlechess II: Chinese Chess* (IBM, Amiga, $49.95) might fulfill the quest for a more varied strategic challenge. **Interplay**'s artists found new subjects for their fascinating animations (elephants, chariots, cannons) in this ancient Chinese game of chess where pieces move along the intersections of gridlines rather than into the squares themselves and the entire board is separated by a flowing river (representing the Yellow River). The game has changed from its predecessor, but the humor and spectacle is still there.

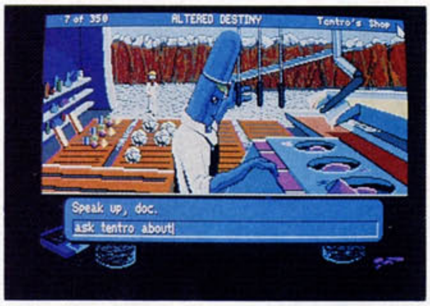
Galleons of Glory (IBM, $44.95), from **Broderbund**, is a strategy game from the "'Where, Oh Where' is *Carmen Sandiego*?" team. This one features three difficulty levels, represented by three of Magellan's exploratory voyages, and follows the "plot" of each different peregrination by the famous explorer. The game stresses resource management and historical discovery over the primarily geographical lessons of *Carmen*.

Broderbund has brought a phenomenally successful pen-and-paper game to life in *Pictionary* (IBM, Amiga, $39.95, C-64, $29.95). Computerizing the popular party game offers some advantages over the parlor game. The computer game offers a solitaire mode where the computer does all the drawing, allows the timer to be adjusted according to the skill levels of the players and features a built-in drawing (paint) program.

Maxis is ready to shout, "Let there be *SimEarth*" (IBM, Macintosh, $69.95) and



Elvira: Mistress of the Dark (Accolade)

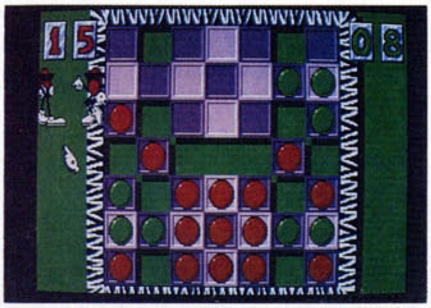


Altered Destiny (Accolade)


Hard Nova (Electronic Arts)



Secret of Monkey Island (LucasFilm)



Spot (Virgin/Mastertronic)

hope that players respond, "It is very good." The GAIA simulation from Will Wright, creator of the megahit *SimCity*, allows players to develop the ecostructure of an entire planet and is more complicated than its city-planning progenitor. Play balance and entertaining feedback will be the keys to whether this product with superior graphics and research will reach the plateau of its sibling.

In something of the same vein, **Electronic Arts**' *PowerMonger* (Amiga, Atari ST, $49.95) offers a real-time strategic challenge with an economic, political and military basis. Players can upgrade their civilizations through economic means or simply conquer other tribes in order to snatch their hard-earned wealth. We think this game offers a more serious model than *Populous*.

SPOT: The Computer Game (IBM, $39.99) is **Virgin Mastertronic**'s brilliant abstract strategy game for one to four players. The title refers to the licensed **7-Up** character from the television commercials who livens up the game board with colorful and humorous animations. The basic strategic challenge is similar to a combination of *Go*'s territorial imperative and *Othello*'s transformation of entire sections of the board from one color to another. However, the game board can be customized to reflect new challenges and strategies with symmetrical patterns or provide handicaps against one side or another using asymmetrical game boards. Frankly, the **Nintendo** version of the game would make a great gift for those who do not have an IBM.

Many of *CGW*'s traditional readership will have fond memories of playing **Milton Bradley**'s *Stratego*. Now, **Accolade** has released a computer version that allows players to choose between three different game boards and sets of pieces, utilize rules variations and always have an opponent at one's disposal. The rules variations are simply: "Silent Defense" (enough fog of war that the player does not know which piece he/she has just captured), "Aggressor Advantage" (tie goes to the aggressor) and "Rescue" (an option which allows captured pieces to return to the board similar to what occurs when pawns reach the back row in chess) (IBM, Macintosh, $49.95).

✔ Simulations for Steve

Blue Max (Amiga, Atari ST, IBM, $49.95) is one of the three World War I aviation simulations expected to be released this Christmas. From **Three-Sixty**, the game features two-player action from the same keyboard and a pure strategy version (phased action) version of the game. At press time, it was not clear whether the game would feature modem-to-modem competition or not. **Dynamix**' *Red Baron* (IBM, $59.95) is likely to be the product with the most available planes from the era and the most versatile campaign game (see the sneak preview in *CGW* #75, p. 6). It also has a versatile VCR feature that enables players to re-enter previously played dogfights and change history. *Knights of the Sky* (IBM, $59.95) is **MicroProse**'s entry into the WWI dogfight and may have the most responsive controls of any of the three serious WWI air combat simulators. Players get a real feel for the "flimsy" nature of their craft and what that does to its aerodynamics. Plus, the **MicroProse** game supports modem play.

World War II buffs are not left out when the Christmas '90 releases hit the shelves. Submarine fans who prefer the Atlantic theater will find *Das Boot* from **Three-Sixty** (Amiga, IBM, $49.95) to have beautiful graphics and detailed options that allow players to toggle between serious simulation and action-oriented entertainment. *Silent Service II* (see the quick look on p. 51) offers vicarious submariners almost all they could want from a Pacific Theater campaign.

With *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* (IBM, $59.95), **Lucasfilm** has taken the technology used in *Battlehawks: 1942* and *Their Finest Hour* and moved from the realms of sophisticated action game to the atmosphere of serious simulation. The research is solid and damage affects each plane's flight model realistically. In addition, World War II air buffs can finally get a chance to envision what it would be like to fly Me 262s, Me 163 rocket planes, Gotha 229 flying wings, Me 109s, Focke-Wulf 190s, P-51 Mustangs, P-47 Thunderbolts and B-17 bombers.

Those who are more inclined toward modern flight can either: re-enact Dale Brown's *Flight of the Old Dog* in **Three-Sixty**'s *MegaFortress* (Amiga, IBM, $59.95), a simulation that carefully follows the book's plot; crawl in the simulated cockpit of *Falcon 3.0* (IBM, $69.95), a technologically enhanced version of **Spectrum HoloByte**'s major hit; fly the Phantoms and Intruders of **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Flight of the Intruder* (see sneak preview on p. 28); or enter the world of Soviet air combat in *Stormovik: SU-25 Soviet Attack Fighter* (IBM, $59.95) from **Electronic Arts**.

(Continued on page 110)

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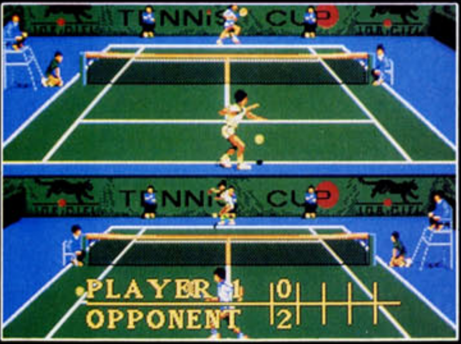


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On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 8, please rate the following games (only if you have played them) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A= Excellent
B= Above Average
C= Average
D= Below Average
F= Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?

1 = Under 14 years old
2 = 14-17 years old
3 = 18-20 years old
4 = 21-30 years old
5 = 31-35 years old
6 = 36-40 years old
7 = 41-50 years old
8 = 51+ years old

2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in decending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?

1 = Less than 2 hours
2 = 2-5 hours
3 = 6-10 hours
4 = 11-20 hours
5 = 21-30 hours
6 = 31+ hours

Games

4. King's Quest IV (Sierra)
5. Unreal (UBI Soft)
6. Star Control (Accolade)
7. Ishido (Accolade)
8. Citadel (Postcraft Int.)
9. Police Quest 2 (Sierra)
10. MegaTraveller 1 (Paragon)
11. Silent Service II (MicroProse)
12. Ultima V (Origin)
13. Starflight 2 (EA)
14. Battlechess (Interplay)
15. Street Rod (California)
16. King's Bounty (New World)
17. Wings (Cinemaware)
18. Second Front (SSI)
19. Guns or Butter (Mindscape)
20. DragonStrike (SSI)
21. A-10 Tank Killer (Dynamix)
22. Sword of the Samurai (MicroProse)
23. Projectyle (EA)
24. Bard's Tale III (EA)
25. Red Storm Rising (MicroProse)
26. Indiana Jones: Graphic Adventure (LucasFilm)
27. Battles of Napoleon (SSI)
28. Tennis Cup (Electronic Zoo)
29. Nobunaga's Ambition (Koei)
30. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
31. Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)
32. SimCity (Maxis)
33. Ultima VI (Origin)
34. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
35. M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse)
36. Populous (EA)
37. Battlehawks 1942 (Lucasfilm)
38. Sword of Aragon (SSI)
39. MechWarrior (Activision)
40. Flight of the Intruder (Spectrum HoloByte)
41. Wayne Gretzky Hockey (Bethesda)
42. Dragon Wars (Interplay)

Articles

43. Spellcasting 101 Sneak Preview
44. Star Control Strategy Article
45. Battletech II Sneak Preview
46. Christmas Buying Guide
47. Phantasie Star II Review
48. Unreal Review
49. Flight of the Intruder Review
50. Scorpion's Mail
51. Scorpion's View: The State of CRGP's
52. Silent Service II Review
53. Street Rod Review
54. Gambling Game Paiktography
55. Over There
56. Taking A Peek
57. Editorial
58. Rumor Bag

Demographic Question

59. Beside computer gaming, what other types of gaming do you regularly participate in?

a) Pen & Paper Role Playing,
b) Live Role Playing,
c) War/Strategy Boardgaming,
d) Play By Mail Gaming,
e) Miniatures
f) Card Games

Conversions Received

Bar Games (Accolade) Amiga

The Cycles (Accolade) Mac

King's Quest IV (Sierra) Amiga

The Fool's Errand (Miles Computing) Amiga,ST

Mixed-Up Mother Goose *Enhanced Version* (Sierra) IBM

Overrun! (SSI) Amiga

Police Quest 2 (Sierra) Amiga

Second Front (SSI) Amiga

Their Finest Hour (LucasFilm) Atari ST

Tunnels of Armageddon (California Dreams) Amiga

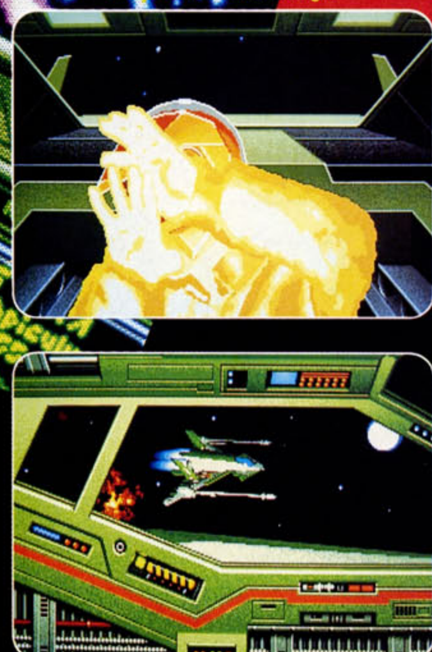
Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego? (Broderbund) C64

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M. Evena-Brooks, Computer Gaming World

"Harpoon is the definitive simulation of modern warfare at sea".
Richard Shefield, Game Players

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THREE-SIXTY

Megatraveller 1

(Continued from page 18)

one character at a time, possibly compete in real-time combat with the computer controlling one or more NPCs? There is no way that what the gamer is given can be considered a "level playing field." So loud have the protests been that Paragon Software's promised revision of the combat system for *Mega-Traveller 2* has been extended to an update of *MT1* and will be utilized in *Space 1889*.

In spite of all this, the present reviewer must confess that the original system can be both more exciting and, possibly, realistic (in producing more of the flavor of combat) than those of a strictly tactical system. With the proper approach (see Tips), it is even possible to win.

Apparently, the interplanetary travel system has caught some flak as well. Maneuvering a space ship in *MT1* is not like operating the usual "space combat simulator." *MT1* has tried to come to grips with gravity and Newton's laws of motion, which may disconcert some people. One's ship will continue to move in a straight line unless thrust is applied to change that motion or unless acted upon by the gravity of a planet or star. To "land" on a world, one must slow the ship to near-zero speed, which is, of course, what is required in actuality. Admittedly, the system takes some practice, but those who master it will be rewarded with significant economies in fuel usage.

A complex game requires extensive documentation, and *MT1* does not fall short in this regard. It has an extensive manual and the production values are excellent. The manual is sturdy, uses a spiral binding so that it can be laid flat while open to a reference point, and abounds in diagrams and pictures. There is a good introduction to the *Traveller* universe in general, and the Imperium-Zhodani conflict in particular, for those not already in the know. The organization is good. For the most part, needed information can be found quickly, although a more extensive Table of Contents is needed to complement the very welcome Index.

A more general knock on the game seems to be that it is essentially an unfinished product. There is certainly some justice in this. The number of manual changes which had to be included on the pamphlet covering machine-specific features is disturbing and the appearance of screen photos on the box which don't resemble anything actually encountered in the game is also rather disquieting. Even setting aside the personal combat system, there are areas where the play balance can be questioned. For instance, the trade system is probably a shade too easy to beat and a few minor additional efforts in that direction would have been likely to have made it considerably more entertaining. All these matters work against the integrity of the game

Tips

1. Save early and save often. Unfortunately, the Save Game function is available only from starport buildings. You may have to play some of the submissions over several times to get a result you feel you can live with.

2. Goods sell on a world at a time-variable discount from what

they can be purchased for there. Unavailability of a particular item on a world is not a guarantee that it will sell there for a high price, but examination of a world's characteristics can provide valuable clues as to what will be valuable there. Try carrying water to Louzy, and explosives to Efate.

3. In combat, rely on one character with exceptional military skills and heavy weapons and armor to bear the brunt of the fighting. Make careful use of obstacles to keep the rest of the party out of harm's way as much as possible.

4. Keep careful track of the location of NPCs offering to buy particular items.

5. Search carefully—and don't leave the hospital ward of the Sharurshid facility on Louzy without getting the second passcard!

6. Don't engage in ship-to-ship combat impulsively. You can get chewed to pieces while putting your Jump and Navigation programs in storage and loading your combat programs. If you're going to fly the Jolly Roger, have your ship ready for it before you leave orbit.

7. Never, never, never leave the starport on airless world without a vacuum suit.

Conclusions

The consensus is certainly that *MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy* (prior to the update) is seriously flawed. One can still appreciate the game for the variety of activities and natural feel to the adventuring it offers, but those looking for the same quality adventure they've experienced in the pen and paper game will simply may have to wait a little longer until the upgrade can be examined. **CGW**

Version 3.0 Update

Version 3.0 of *Megatraveller 1: The Zhodani Consipracy* arrived in our offices after presstime. Paragon states in a letter to *CGW* that it will upgrade earlier versions free of charge. Owners should call or write directly to:
Paragon Software Corporation
600 Rugh Street, Suite A
Greensburg, PA 15601
or call (412) 838-1166 during business hours.

The gist of the changes in the 3.0 version include the ability to print out characters and the "enhanced combat system." This combat system allows for pausing the game during combat so that "orders" may be issued to characters. These orders may consist of either moving to a new location or firing at a designated target. Combat can be interrupted repeatedly so as to assign characters new orders. The character on the display, however, is still manually operated as per the original *Megatraveller 1* combat system.

The game we at *CGW* hope to see in the next offering in the *Megatraveller* series would have all the scope and grandeur of the first release, but with a *phased* combat system where players may maintain more control of their adventures.

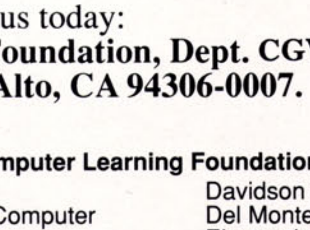


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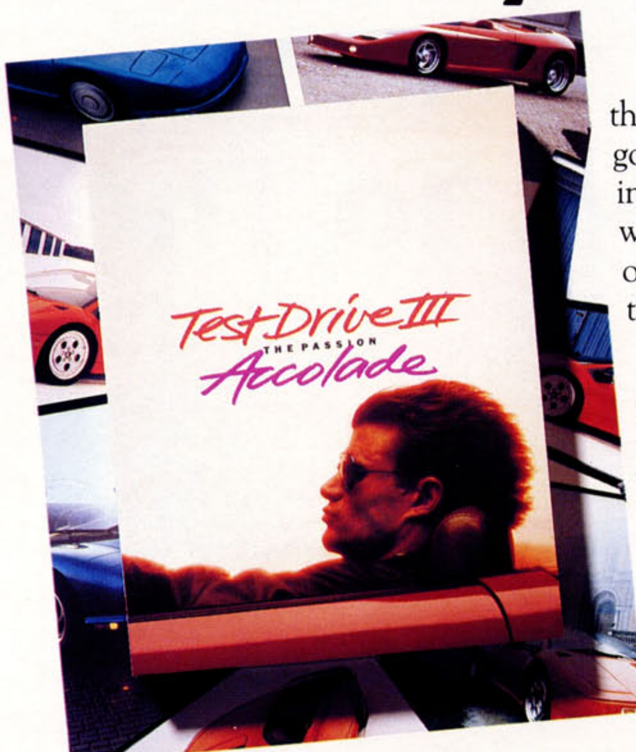
Futuristic and fast. Chevrolet's prototype CERV III is packed with down-the-road engineering and punch. 0 to 60 mph in 3.9 sec.



Hurry. They'r



New features include night driving, bad weather, working headlights and wipers, Instant Replay and a 360-degree Chase Car view.



Brace yourself *Test Drive* fans. *Test Drive III: The Passion*™ is unleashed.

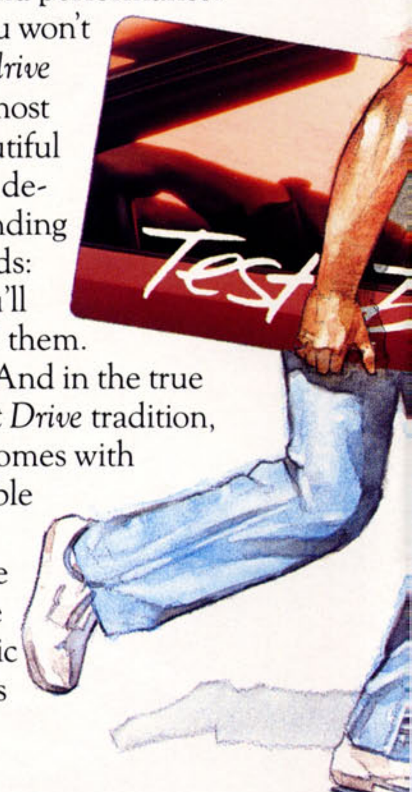
It's totally new. Totally hot. And it'll totally blow the doors off of any driving simulation on the market.

Test Drive III's advanced synthesis of bit-mapped and polygon-fill graphics, plus digitized interiors, provides the racer with an unprecedented sense of speed, realistic road perspective and performance.

You won't just *drive* the most beautiful and demanding roads: You'll *feel* them.

And in the true *Test Drive* tradition, TDIII comes with incredible cars.

Settle into the futuristic cockpits





Race head-to-head against the computer on branching roads that offer cross traffic, long tunnels and ocean straightaways.



Digitized dreams. Race sleek and sexy pro- type sports cars through the most detailed graphically "real" world of any driving ga

Actual game screens from IBM PC.
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Unmatched realism. TD III allows you to throw your car in reverse, drive back the way you came, take multiple routes – explore!

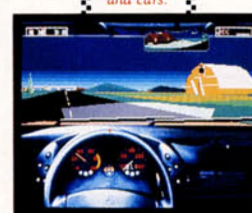


COMING SOON! TDIII add-on disks, containing both scenery and cars.

...e Going Fast.



Complete sound and music support on all leading sound boards throughout the game. Add-on disks contain both scenery and cars.





of three exclusive and ultra-expensive prototype sports cars—the 225 mph Chevrolet CERV III,™ $2 million Pininfarina Mythos™ and the 485-horsepower Lamborghini Diablo.™

The Passion is hot. So hot that for a limited time, Accolade will give a free *Test Drive III* Dashboard Sun Shade for your own dream machine with every TDIII game purchased. See your participating retailer for details.

Test Drive III: The Passion. The fastest-selling driving games of all time just got faster.

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Better move fast. These free Test Drive III Dashboard Sun Shades won't last forever.

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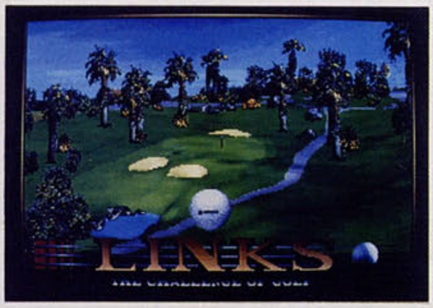
Blow by some oceanfront property at 200 mph plus. Feel the CERV III hug the highway. It just doesn't get any better than this.





Relive your greatest crashes on Instant Replay or check out your driving situation on the 360-degree Chase Car view with variable Zoom.

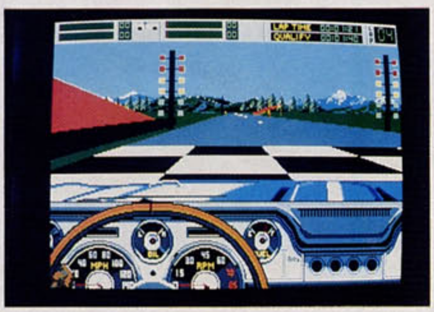




Links (Access)



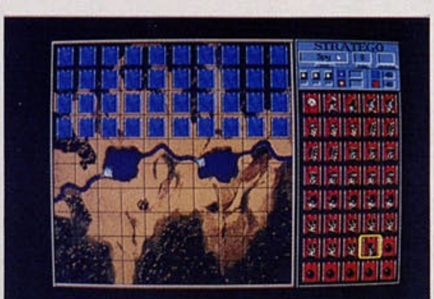
Stormovik (Electronic Arts)



Stunt Driver (Spectrum HoloByte)



Command HQ (Microplay)



Stratego (Accolade)

Buying Guide

(Continued from page 100)

Like most recent **EA** simulations (with the exception of *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation*), the emphasis is on the mission-based campaign game and "feel" of the combat being simulated rather than presenting an authentic model of the flight dynamics of the particular plane.

Those who want to try their hands at "aerial" combat in outer space have two extremely viable options. *Wing Commander* (IBM, $69.95) is Chris Roberts' potential masterpiece from **Origin**. Chris has brought rotoscoping techniques, soundtrack branching according to the game's tempo, cinematic touches, hot graphics, fast scrolling and a campaign game where the war is actually affected (and branches accordingly) by what the player accomplishes. The other viable option is **MicroProse**'s *LightSpeed* (IBM, $59.95), a hybrid of role-playing and starship simulation. The game involves exploration, negotiation and, when one must, annihilation. Fast-scrolling simulates bringing one's own ship into combat, as well as offers special effects such as remote-controlled fighters to engage the enemy and kamikaze "missiles" to aim at one's victims. Both games feature incredible frame rates and very attractive polygon-filled graphics.

Sports fans are not left entirely out of the picture. *Links*, from **Access** (IBM, $59.95), is the extremely well-rendered golf game which has been previously touted as "VGA World-Class Leader Board" in these pages. The picture in the buying guide comes from a demonstration program, so the title and huge golf ball are not usually on the screen. However, *all* the scenery on the golf course is just as detailed as this which is shown on the demo program.

Spectrum HoloByte is carving out new genres of driving simulations with last year's *Vette!* and this year's *Stunt Driver* (IBM, $49.95). In the current game, players drive a 1966 Shelby Mustang against a VW bug (driven by a "little old lady" from Pasadena or elsewhere), a Porsche (wasting away in Yuppieville with a driver who fits the profile) or an IROC Z (driven by a bully who has never quite grown up). The game features five tracks which become ever more serpentine with each increase in difficulty, as well as a grid-based track construction editor to allow players to customize their "battlefields."

✔ Wargames for Willie

The number of wargame titles continues to dwindle. **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**'s *Interceptor* is the first in their *Renegade Legions* (IBM, $59.95) series, featuring tactical level ship-to-ship combat. Those who are more down-to-earth will want to check out **Command Simulations**'s computer version of **GDW**'s *Suez '73* (Amiga, IBM, $59.95).

Command HQ from **MicroPlay** (IBM, $59.95) shows hints of a "breakthrough" for more than just the hardcore wargamers. It is a step up from *Risk!* and akin to the **Milton Bradley** boardgame *Axis & Allies*. In scope, diversity and play value, *Command HQ* is a solid strategic level strategy game with a mercifully short learning curve. The head-to-head play element allows for modem, serial port or network play with plenty of useful and easy to access interfaces from which the player can gather vital military information. Also suitable for solitaire play, scenarios cover global conquest from World War I through World War IV and offers an *Empire*-like expansion and conquest scenario.

From France comes *Full Metal Planet* (Amiga, Atari ST, IBM, $49.95). Published in the United States by **Data East**, *Full Metal Planet* offers one to four players a planetary surface which is constantly changing due to tidal movements for their global battlefield. Players select the landing site for their interplanetary freighter and mining vessels, deploy their tanks for defense and mine all the ore they can. It's a fast-flowing 25-turn strategic-level competition that offers plenty of options for "stabbing" one's opponents. The game is ruthless in its victory conditions and enforcement of penalties.

Subliminal Ad Department

So, here's the hint list for 1990! For best results, place a copy of this article (marked with your fondest wishes) under your loved one's pillow for maximum subliminal effect *[Computer Gaming World makes a great gift!]* or tape another annotated copy to the refrigerator door so that family members cannot miss it *[Computer Gaming World makes a great gift!]* . Right now, the staff at *CGW* is waiting as expectantly as a child on Christmas Eve to get our hands on some of these great products! Merry Christmas!

CGW

Break New Ground With Jack Nicklaus.

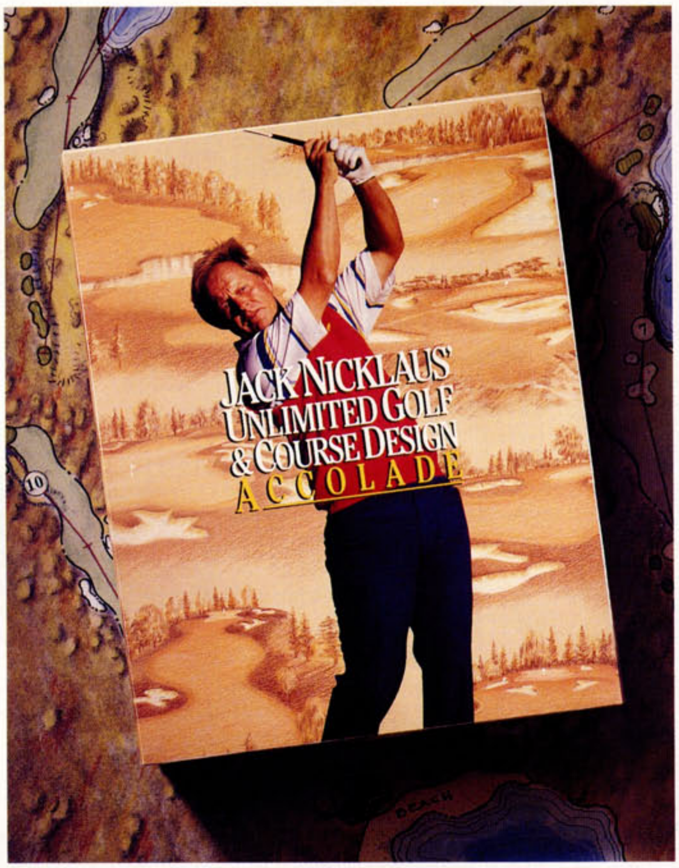


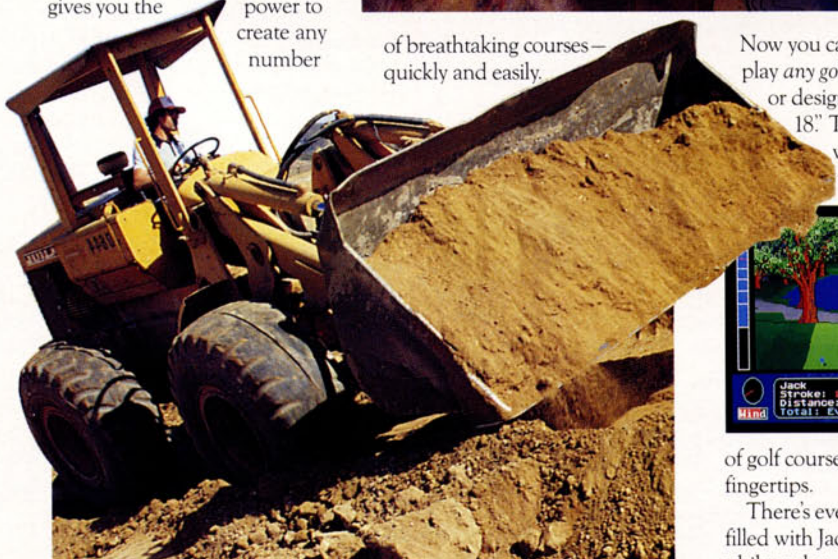
As a player, he has earned the title of "Golfer of The Century." As a golf course designer, his layouts are legendary.



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Jack Nicklaus' Unlimited Golf & Course Design™ combines a state-of-the-art golf game with an amazing Course Designer that gives you the power to create any number of breathtaking courses—quickly and easily.





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of golf course design is at your fingertips.

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Two courses—Muirfield Village, one of the Top 10 in the world, and The Bear's Track, a dream course designed by Jack



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Actual game screens from IBM PC/VGA version of the game. Other versions may vary.

The Birth of an Art Form

by Johnny L. Wilson

The State of the Industry: Recently, I have been asked my opinion about the state of computer games as art with regard to two very different agendas. First, a journalist with a major metropolitan newspaper asked me where I would place the modern computer game with regard to, for instance, the history of the motion picture industry. I unhesitatingly observed that we were still in the silent picture era. Second, a correspondent on a major interactive computer network was expressing his frustration that a certain publisher had allowed some "classic" games to go out of print. Since the entertainment software industry so often turns to Hollywood as a simile for its own development, I began to wonder about the formation of "classic" films.

It seems to me that there are many parallels between the "silent era" of motion picture production and that of computer entertainment today. Litigation is a common feature to both the first decade of motion picture making and the entertainment software industry of today. Thomas Edison owned both patents on the loop used in all film projectors and sued anyone who used them in their own projectors. This may have been the first "loop and feel" lawsuit. Another common feature between the industries was the need for a viable platform. In the motion picture industry, this developed in the move from independent projectionists (who moved from one vaudeville house to another) to the use of permanent motion picture theaters. Currently, we have independent publishers who move from one computer platform to another. Yet, we really cannot hope to reach the masses until some standardized form of presentation system is provided.

A third feature common to early films and current software is the lack of a star system. Outside of Edwin S. Porter (*The Great Train Robbery*, 1903), the first decade of film making is virtually devoid of noteworthy directors and stars. It wasn't until 1913 when Mack Sennett left Biograph to begin making shorts for Keystone (of "Kops" fame) and two years later, when Griffith broke from Biograph and started making feature films (including *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915, about which we will speak more later) and Chaplin left Keystone to create longer films for Mutual and First National that any type of star system began to emerge. All three began to realize that the art advanced as the creative forces assumed cinematic control and developed a structural integrity hitherto lacking in film. Later, when this director as *artiste* system began breaking down, Hollywood become known for its genre pictures.

Software development is still heavy on the corporate management side, just like the pre-1913 films. Little recognition is given to the "directing/creating/writing" talent and much more import given to distributing the product. We are in danger of seeing floods of genre product flowing through the marketing channel, primarily because publishers do not value innovation. *SimCity* is successful because it does not fit in any genre, but it is questionable whether it could have been published without Will Wright and Jeff Braun taking a chance with their own company. *Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon* is extremely successful for **MicroProse**, but it is doubtful whether it would have been published were it not for Sid's personal influence in the company (which softened any marketing department doubts that may have been voiced).

Finally, the question of art and the "classics." *The Great Train Robbery* was the first major commercial success of the film industry. It used cut scenes, told a story and played on screens for almost a decade. The first film that is often cited as a work of art is *The Birth of a Nation*. It was a commercial success, but it was a social controversy. While the film only brought protests in some southern cities, it brought riots in others. Art often has a social impact. It is probably as much because of the way people initially *reacted* to Griffith's work that it is remembered as a "classic" as for what the film itself contains.

Some computer games are classics as much for where we were (and who we were) when we first played them as for how well they were done. Which brings us to two important questions. First, were the games to be considered "classics" because they were the best of their era or because they have something lasting to offer? Second, would there be any value to repackaging, say, **Infocom** classics for the MS-DOS platform or *M.U.L.E.* for the Amiga? Apparently, some companies believe so. **MicroProse**'s new versions of *F-15* and *Silent Service* on MS-DOS and *Pirates* on the Amiga indicate that there may be such a value for some properties. Let's hope others determine that this is true, as well.

State of the Magazine: This issue, *CGW* offers its own classic. The "Christmas Buying Guide" has become a tradition in our November issues since 1987. Our primary goal is to present a hint list that can be copied, marked and presented to those loved ones who never know what to get the computer gamer on their gift list.

This issue also holds a special bonus section. With the expected price wars on dedicated game machines around Christmas time, computer gamers may want some information to help them with the old electric train ploy (You know, where Dad buys his son a train so *he* can play with it?). Co-designer of *Wizardry IV* Roe Adams offers an overview on dedicated game machines and CRPGs for those so inclined and for those thinking of buying a game machine for themselves. **CGW**



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